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THE EVOLUTION AND HISTORY OF SOFTBALL  
IN THE UNITED STATES

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BY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to trace in detail the history and development of softball. This was accomplished by intensive research of all material available pertaining to the introduction and first mention of softball in the civilized world through its development to the game that is played at the present time. All books, encyclopedias, and articles that were accessible to the writer on the subject of softball were carefully studied.

In presenting the history of softball as a player and spectator sport, it was also necessary to review the part played by the Amateur Softball Association and its effect on the national development of the game.

Sources of data. The data pertaining to this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Most of the material set forth in Chapters II through V is secondary in nature and comes from recognized and accepted softball authorities and from the records of national athletic organizations. An extended study of bibliographies and lists of theses failed to reveal any study similar to the present one.

Much of the data was also secured from the files of the Amateur Softball Association, Newark, New Jersey. Balls and Strikes, a newspaper edited by this Association, was also a source of valuable material.

Purpose of the study. Softball players, coaches, and students in physical education should be familiar not only with the rules of all the major sports but also with their histories. It is with this purpose in mind that the material on the origin and development of softball is presented here.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGIN OF THE GAME

Since the beginning of the human race, mankind has had the urge to "sock" something round and spherical with a club or an instrument of similar shape or appearance. It has been natural to throw things such as stones, apples, or any round object--and nothing more natural than to throw back.

The slinging of stone was an ancient art, one of the most famous incidents being the encounter between David and Goliath. The Tribe of Benjamin was celebrated in the Bible for the excellence of its slingers. It is stated in the Book of Judges<sup>1</sup> that seven hundred Benjaminites, all lefthanders, could sling stones at a hair's breadth and not miss.

It has also been noted that handball was played at the siege of Troy in 1184 B.C.<sup>2</sup> British archeologists have unearthed from ancient Egyptian ruins a perfectly preserved ball from approximately 1250 B.C. which was about the size of the present day softball.<sup>3</sup> Herodotus is said to have accredited the "invention of the ball" to the Lydians.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Judges 20:15.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Strutt, The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England (London: Methuen and Co., 1801), p. 160.

<sup>3</sup>Robert W. Henderson, Ball, Bat and Bishop (New York: Rockport Press, Inc., 1947), p. 138.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 139.

Homer said in his Odyssey:

O'er the green mead, sporting virgins play,  
Their shining veils unbound, along the skies,  
Tost and re-tost, the ball incessant flies.<sup>1</sup>

This passage has been interpreted by some writers to mean that Angalla of Corcura was the first who made a ball "for the purpose of pastime," which she presented to Nausica, the daughter of Alcinous, King of Phoenecia, and taught her how to use it.<sup>2</sup>

Handball, then called "Palm Ball," was played in France during the reign of Charles V from 1500 to 1558. The nobility played it principally, and often wagered large bets of money.<sup>3</sup>

The first record of a ball being hit with a bastion (bat) was in Fourteenth Century England. It was called "goff" and one branch of this game later evolved into golf. It was descended from a rustic pastime of the Romans and was played with a ball of leather stuffed with feathers.<sup>4</sup>

In the reign of Edward III, 1312-1377, the name "Cambuca" was applied to this game. By this time a crooked bat had been invented which looked not unlike the present day hockey stick. This bat was

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Pope, The Odyssey of Homer, Book VI (London: Milford House, Strand, 1854), p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Strutt, op. cit., p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

called a "bandy" because of its curved end, and the game later was called "Bandy Ball."<sup>1</sup> Before the end of the reign of Edward VIII this bat was straightened out somewhat to resemble the present softball and hardball bat. The name of the game was also changed to "Club Ball." The closest resemblance to any recorded rules on this so-called "Club Ball" is a passage in John Strutt's book, The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England.

He who is possessed of the bat holds the ball also, which he either threw into the air and struck with the bat as it descended, or cast forcibly upon the ground and beat it away when it rebounded; the intention of his antagonist to catch the ball need not be remarked.<sup>2</sup>

Robert W. Henderson, former librarian for the New York Public Library, now retired, made a lifelong study of books and records pertaining to sports, and particularly to baseball. It is his opinion that the Egyptians started this game some four thousand years ago, and pictures seem to lend credence to this belief.<sup>3</sup> The ancient Egyptians used balls and bats in peculiar pagan rites which were the first crude forerunners of modern ball-and-bat pastimes such as softball, baseball, tennis, golf, and hockey.

It seems that the Egyptians chose up sides and belted each other on the coconuts with clubs to prove a point that somehow

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Strutt, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>3</sup>Robert W. Henderson, "How Baseball Began," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, XLI, No. 4 (April, 1937), 287-288.



escapes us. They even had Egyptian bloomer girls who, armed with sticks, clobbered each other even unto death.

This damsel Donnybrook did have a point. Maidens who died of their wounds in those days were said to be false virgins. Soon, however, the Egyptians got smartened up and started socking a ball (representing one of their deity's big fat heads) instead of their own heads, with clubs. Out of such crude beginnings various ball-and-bat games, many of them closely associated with religious ceremonies, grew.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Henderson, writing in the Bulletin of the New York Public Library for April, 1937, attempted to prove that baseball was not an American game but was an English one.

As nearly as 1744, in England, baseball was a popular children's game. No--I do not mean Rounders, nor One-Old-Cat, nor even Four-Old-Cat. I repeat: A children's game called Baseball in which a player, after striking a ball, ran around the bases until he reached Home.<sup>2</sup>

In support of this theory, he quoted from a "Bantam Book" entitled Little Pretty Pocket Book, published in England in 1787. An illustrated poem ran as follows:

The ball, once struck off,  
Away flies the boy  
To the next defined post  
And then Home with joy.<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1748 Lady Mary Lepell Hervey wrote concerning

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Little Pretty Pocket Book (London, England: Isaiah Thomas, 1787), p. 2.

the children of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who "in the winter, in a large room, divert themselves at baseball, a game all who are or have been schoolboys are acquainted with."<sup>1</sup>

This evidence would seem to indicate that baseball, at least in its crude beginnings, was started long before the year 1815 and not on the vacant lots of New York City as some authorities have believed. However, despite its original beginnings in England, baseball today is as American as The Star Spangled Banner. It and its amazing offspring, softball, were developed and popularized in America long after it died down in England by giving way to "Cricket" and "Rounders."

#### I. EVOLUTION OF MODERN SOFTBALL

The old boxing glove. Members of the Farragut Boat Club in Chicago, Illinois were lounging around on Thanksgiving Day of 1887, awaiting Western Union bulletins on the Yale-Harvard football game (the final score of which was Yale 17-Harvard 8). One of the Yale enthusiasts picked up an old boxing glove in the gymnasium and in his exuberance threw it at a Harvard rooter. The Harvard rooter had a wand in his hand, saw the glove coming, and batted it back.

This by-play caused one George Hancock to get a sudden

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<sup>1</sup>Letters of Lady Mary Lepell Hervey (London, England: J. Murray, 1821).

inspiration, and he said: "Say boys, let's play ball." To the accompaniment of remarks of incredulity he tied the glove into a ball with its own laces. Procuring a piece of chalk he marked off a home plate, bases, and pitcher's box of the dwarfed dimensions made necessary by the confines of the Boat Club gymnasium. The boys present divided into two teams, probably the Yale sympathizers on one side and the Harvards on the other. A good time was had by all and an otherwise dull afternoon turned into a sportfest.<sup>1</sup>

The score, which nobody cared about, was said to have been something like 41 to 40. The significant thing was that George Hancock and his friends started something which was destined, in the next century, to become one of the greatest of all participant sports with over a million people playing it every summer. Organized softball owes a great debt to these twenty young men, though the names of all are not known. Those who are known, in addition to George Hancock, were:

Frank Staples, 162 30th Street, Chicago, a cashier.  
 Tom Jenkins, 243 Monroe Street, dry goods merchant.  
 Al Porter, 3116 Forest Avenue, shipping merchant.  
 Ogden Downs, 235 Michigan Avenue, salesman.  
 Warren Kniskern, 3245 Vernon Avenue, general passenger agent  
 for Northwestern Railway.

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Indoor Baseball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1906), p. 12.

August White, 3842 Johnson Place, commission merchant.  
Lyman B. Glover, 3041 Groveland Avenue, theater manager.  
Carl Bryant, 3228 Groveland Avenue, bookkeeper.  
Edwin Anderson, Farragut Boat Club, superintendent.  
Edward Palmer, 629 43rd Street, watchman.<sup>1</sup>

Hancock went home that afternoon and put together a crude home-made baseball of a size considerably larger than the ordinary baseball but more adapted to the cramped space of a gymnasium. A can of white paint was used to make a permanent diamond on the gymnasium floor. Hancock wrote a set of rules designed to fit the smaller space and called his game "Indoor Baseball."

The game became popular in Chicago that winter of 1887 and was played in other gymnasiums, with the Farragut Boat Club team challenging and playing teams from other clubs and sections of the city. In the spring it was moved outdoors and played on restricted playground fields which were not big enough for baseball. It was there called "Indoor-Outdoor Baseball." Its popularity spread in a few years to Minneapolis and St. Paul, to Denver and Los Angeles, and eventually over the entire United States.<sup>2</sup>

George Hancock was recognized as the authority on indoor baseball of the nineteenth century. In 1889 his first set of standard

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

indoor baseball rules was printed by a Chicago publisher and sold in all parts of the country. Following are some excerpts from this first set of indoor-outdoor baseball rules ever printed.

It can be played in any hall or room of dimensions which will permit of a proper distance for bases and fielding, the composition of the floor being immaterial, as the rubber-soled shoes required to be worn are equally suitable for a smooth surface or carpet.

The game is played like ordinary baseball with special rules and regulations to equalize the difference in size of grounds and surroundings.

The ball is of large size, made of a yielding substance, especially for this purpose. The bat is 2 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  feet long and 1 and  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter at the large end. The four bases are each 1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet square, half filled with sand.

The catcher should always play up close to the bat as foul tips are frequent, and the composition of the ball will not allow a serious injury if a player should be struck in the face with it.

Masks and gloves are not essential, but it is a good idea for players to have their suits padded all around the knees, as the frequent sliding and bumping on the hard floor would otherwise be hurtful.<sup>1</sup>

Hancock then appended nineteen special rules which were necessary for adapting the outdoor game of baseball to the vastly abbreviated space available inside. These rules, as officially adopted by the Mid-Winter Indoor Baseball League of Chicago on October 24, 1889, were as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

1. The pitcher's box shall be 6 by 3 feet, to be marked on the floor; the nearest line of said box to be 22 feet from home base. This distance is not to be varied.
2. The bases to be 27 feet from each other, forming a diamond, where the size of the hall will allow. Should the hall be too narrow, the distance between first and third bases may be lessened. The distance from home to second base should always be  $37\frac{1}{2}$  feet.
3. Nine or eight men may be played on each side.
4. Only shoes with rubber soles may be worn.
5. Only straight-armed pitching, in which the arm and hand swing parallel with the body, will be allowed, and the ball is not to be curved.
6. A batted ball which strikes inside or on the foul line is fair, the first point of contact with the floor, object or player, deciding, regardless of where it afterwards rolls.
7. A batted ball first striking outside the foul lines shall be foul.
8. The third strike caught before touching the ground is out.
9. A foul tip or foul fly caught before touching the ground is out.
10. Four unfair pitched balls give the batsman first base.
11. A pitched ball striking the batter is a dead ball, but does not entitle him to a base. If it should be the third strike, the batter is out, and no base can be run on the ball.
12. A base runner must not leave his base on a pitched ball not struck, until after it has reached or passed the catcher, on penalty of being called back.
13. A base runner must not leave his base while the pitcher holds the ball standing in his box.
14. A batted ball, caught after striking any wall, or fixture, shall be considered first bound, and is not out.
15. In over-running first base the runner can turn either way in returning.
16. If a batter intentionally kicks or interferes with a ball he has just batted, he is out.
17. If a batted ball, after striking fair, rebounds and hits the batter, he shall not be declared out on that account.
18. The game shall be judged by two umpires; one shall take a position in center field and give decisions on second and third base plays, and shall see that a base runner does not leave any base before a pitched ball has reached the catcher. The other umpire shall take a position behind the catcher and judge all other points of the game. The two umpires

shall change positions at the end of every inning. Umpires shall not be chosen from the two clubs contesting.<sup>1</sup>

To dispel any doubt regarding Chicago's claim to the birthplace of softball, the following documentation is presented:

An amusement which is purely Chicagoan, invented by a Chicagoan, and little known outside the city limits, is 'indoor base ball.' The game was invented in 1887 by George W. Hancock, of the Farragut Club, and has now become a recognized and leading feature among winter diversions. It is played in any hall large enough for the purpose with a miniature diamond marked in chalk, a soft ball, and a light bat. All other features are those of the outdoor game. There are 100 organized indoor ball clubs in Chicago, and their games attract thousands of spectators of the best classes. In fact, indoor ball is particularly a sport of gentlemen, and especially of club members.<sup>2</sup>

There are 'Indoor Base Ball Clubs' connected with nearly every social club of prominence in the city, besides a great number of independent organizations in city and suburbs. There are two leading 'leagues' of Indoor Base Ball Clubs--the 'Midwinter' and 'Chicago Indoor Base Ball League.' The game was very popular and fashionable in Chicago last winter and the probabilities are that it will continue to be so for more seasons to come. The game is of Chicago invention and followed what came to be known as the 'Roller Skating Craze.' The ball used is of large size and made of a yielding substance. The bat is 2-3/4 feet long and 1 1/4 inches in diameter at the large end. The four bases are each 1 1/2 feet square, each filled with sand. They are not secured to the floor, and a man may slide in and carry the base with him. The pitcher's box is six by three feet, and is marked on the floor in chalk. The nearest line is 22 feet from the home plate. The bases are 27 feet from each other, forming a diamond. The distance from home to second base by a straight line is 37 1/2 feet. Eight or nine men may be played on a side and only rubber-soled shoes are used. The leading teams are LaSalles, Kenwoods, Oaks of Austin, Idlewilds of Evanston, Carletons, Marquettes, Farraguts, and Ashlands of the Midwinter League, and the Harvards, Lincoln Cycling Club,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup>George E. Moran, Dictionary of Chicago and Its Vicinity (Chicago: George E. Moran, 1892), p. 118.

Chicago Cycling Club and South Side Illinois Club of the Indoor League.<sup>1</sup>

The Minneapolis story. Minneapolis was the next large center to promote and foster the streamlined brand of baseball. From its beginning in 1895 the Minneapolis story has been one of amazing expansion of this popular sport.

The first league was organized in the Flour City in 1900.<sup>2</sup> By 1936 the sport, then called Diamond Ball, had lured ten thousand participants. The records of the recreation department showed that these players had been watched by a half million fans and rooters.

The game was started in Minneapolis by Lewis Rober, Sr., then the Lieutenant of Minneapolis Fire Company No. 11. Although the game had its crude beginnings in Chicago eight years before this time, communications were much slower at that time than they are today so it is not known whether Lieutenant Rober had heard of the new game being played there. It could be possible that Rober conceived of the plan in much the same manner as did George Hancock.

Those were the days of the one-platoon fire companies with firemen on duty twenty-four hours a day. They lived on the second floors of the fire houses and when the alarm came in they jumped into their working clothes and slid down to the first floor on a brass pole.

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<sup>1</sup>John J. Flinn, The Standard Guide to Chicago (Chicago: Standard Guide Company, 1892), pp. 221-222.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew T. Caine, Official Kitten League Guide (St. Paul, Minn.: Matthew T. Caine, 1916), p. 1.



These men had a lot of idle time on their hands and, to combat any tendency toward ennui or adult delinquency, Lieutenant Rober spent much of his spare time making medicine balls and promoting boxing bouts and the like. But these sports did not afford much opportunity for everybody to participate.

Rober suddenly thought of a scheme for adapting the national sport known as baseball to the small vacant lot adjoining the fire house. He cut the bases in half and the pitching distance down to thirty-five feet. He made up a small-sized medicine ball and had a wood-turner make a bat with a two-inch diameter. The game immediately became popular and other fire companies took it up, as well as other groups using the city's playgrounds.

The next year Lieutenant Rober was transferred to Fire Company No. 19 where he promptly organized a team which was named the "Kittens." The boys at Fire Company No. 9 organized a team called the "Rats" and challenged the "Kittens" to a game. The "Kittens" won the first game 5-0 and the second encounter went to the "Rats" by 4-2. Approximately fifteen hundred people witnessed each game played on successive Saturday afternoons.

Of these games, the Minneapolis Tribune of May 24, 1936, said:

Things were different in those days. There was a vacant space around fire stations, and it was no trick at all to lay out a diamond. The game itself did not require a great deal of space. The men could get plenty of exercise and enjoyment playing the game, and still stay near their stations.

By 1900 the game had grown so popular that a league was started. This league was made up of the Kittens of Engine

House 19, the Rats of No. 9, the Whales of No. 4, the Salisburys, Pillsburys, and Central Avenues. Feeling ran high in these league games. It was not unusual to have a crowd of 3,000 people at the playing field.

Sometimes two brothers would belong to different teams. Spirit would be so intense that families would be divided on the merits of the two teams, and some members of a family would go a whole season without speaking to one another.

The name 'Kitten League Ball' was given the game in the summer of 1900 by Captain George Kehoe of Truck Company No. 1 in honor of Lieutenant Rober's original team. This later was shortened to 'Kitten Ball,' and at the present time the game is known variously throughout the country as Kitten Ball, Diamond Ball, and Softball.

Kitten Ball came under the Park Board program in 1913, when leagues were formed among the boys of the city playgrounds. The limited time, space, and equipment the game required soon led to its adoption by commercial firms and athletic associations throughout the city.

In 1920 there were 64 men's teams in 11 divisions, and 25 girls' teams in four divisions entered under the Park Board. Rules of the game have changed but little since its inception 40 years ago.

A comparison of the first rulebook (Official Kitten Ball Guide) published in 1906 with the rulebook in use today shows only minor changes:

'Baselines in 1905, 45 feet; in 1936, 45 feet. Pitching distance in 1906, 35 feet; in 1936, 37 feet,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Size of ball in 1906, 7 ounces, 13 inches in circumference; in 1936, 6 ounces, 12 inches in circumference. Size of bat in 1936, 34 inches in length, 2 inches in diameter; in 1936, 34 inches in length,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches in diameter. Number of players in 1906, 10; in 1936, 10. Number of innings in 1906, 9; in 1936, 7.

The game was known as Kitten Ball until 1922 when the Park authorities, feeling that the name was not appropriate, changed it to Diamond Ball.

Rules of the game today are not uniform over the country although an attempt to make them so now is being made by the

recently formed Amateur Softball Association of America.<sup>1</sup>

Continuing, the Tribune quotes Karl Raymond, then the Minneapolis Director of Recreation:

Diamond Ball is not baseball. It finds its basis in baseball but it does not require the high degree of organization, nor the complete equipment that baseball requires. It is essentially a game of recreation.

The longer baseline in baseball makes the game too difficult, especially for girls, and also requires a larger area for play. Using the shorter distances, the game is much more adaptable for athletic recreation.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1915 saw the new game taken up actively in Minneapolis' twin city, St. Paul. The St. Paul Pioneer Press of August 15, 1915, said:

Kitten Ball has at last come into its own in St. Paul. The popular game--a first cousin to the great American sport and half-brother to the indoor baseball game--has secured a foothold in this city. It has been played here for the past two or three years, but not until the Park Board officially recognized it at the start of the present season did it really display a healthy growth.

Kitten Ball is faster than baseball. Games of nine innings duration have been frequently played in 45 minutes. It is an ideal after-dinner sport which may be indulged in by any person, man or woman, without danger of injury or lameness.

This season has found many well-organized leagues in St. Paul. Wherever there is a playground or a plot of ground large enough to lay out a diamond, there the Kitten game will be found. Nine leagues are now finishing their schedules in St. Paul.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Minneapolis Tribune, May 24, 1936, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>St. Paul Pioneer Press, August 15, 1915, p. 3.

## II. FORERUNNERS OF MODERN SOFTBALL GAME

Playground ball. Beginning with the George Hancock version of indoor baseball in 1887, the game has been variously known as: Kitten Ball, Playground Ball, Diamond Ball, Twilight Ball, Recreation Ball, Army Ball, Indoor-Outdoor, Lightning Ball, Mushball, Big Ball, and Night Ball.<sup>1</sup> A name which has only recently begun to catch on in some parts of the United States, and to an even greater extent in Canada, is Fastball. Since the game is so much faster than its parent, Baseball, this name may grow more in popularity.

The popularity of Hancock's Indoor Baseball in the winter of 1887 resulted in its being brought out of doors in the spring of 1888. The cramped indoor diamond, twenty-seven feet square, was enlarged to such distances as thirty, thirty-five, and forty-five feet and the game was called Indoor-Outdoor.<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1897 this game had become so widespread, especially in the midwest, that an official Indoor Baseball Guide was issued that year by the American Sports Publishing Company of New York.<sup>3</sup>

Sporadic and scattered attempts to call the sport Playground Ball

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<sup>1</sup>A. T. Noren, Softball (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1940), p. IX.

<sup>2</sup>Spalding's Official Indoor Baseball Guide, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

were made until 1908. In that year the National Amateur Playground Association of the United States was formed and this Association published a Playground Ball rulesbook and guide. Principal deviations from the present day rules were:

1. The first batter to get on in an inning could run to either first or third base. All following batters in that inning had to run in the same direction.
2. A legal game consisted of five, seven or nine innings--at the option of the contesting teams.
3. The game could be played by points instead of runs if desired. A point was scored by each and every base reached by a runner.
4. The bases were thirty-five feet apart, and the pitcher's box was thirty feet from the home plate. The ball could be anywhere from twelve to fourteen inches in circumference. The bat was restricted to a two-inch diameter.
5. Only three unfairly delivered balls were required for a base on balls. A base runner could not leave his base until the ball crossed the home plate.<sup>1</sup>

This game with the shorter bases and large ball was particularly adapted to playgrounds, and in the era following 1908 the playground program of most municipalities grew by leaps and bounds. With this program grew the game of Playground Ball.

Prior to, and in the formative years of the Amateur Softball Association, spikes were barred. Only the catcher and the first baseman could wear gloves. A runner could not score on a passed ball. The third strike was out even if the ball went ten feet over the catcher's head.

Ten players constituted a team, this being a throwback to indoor baseball days. The softball, the midget bases, and the rule allowing

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Indoor Baseball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1908), pp. 79-106.

bunting made it necessary for two players to play within ten feet or so of home plate. These players were called the right and left shortstops. Out of doors the shortstop played in his normal position but the tenth player was retained. He was called the shortfielder and could play anywhere on fair territory that his captain elected, usually some place between the outfielders and the infielders.

The length of the bases and the distance between home plate and the pitcher's box were constantly being changed. These usually varied in different states. In many cases they were adapted to the size of the field on which the game was being played.

A 1932 tournament in Milwaukee found nearly every one of the forty participating teams used to different rules. This brought about a number of ludicrous situations, with the various combatants trying to reconcile the different playing rules.<sup>1</sup> It became a recognized fact that standardization of the rules for every section of the country was a necessity to prevent the differences in rules from being a determining factor in the competition between teams from different sections of the country.

The first major attempt in this direction was made by the National Recreation Association in 1927 at the request of various recreation executives. A committee was appointed, headed by Ernest W. Johnson

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<sup>1</sup>Yale Lichtig, "In and Around Milwaukee," Softballer (June, 1938), 13, 27.

of St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> This first Joint Rules Committee consisted of representatives from the National Recreation Association, the Young Men's Christian Association, and the American Physical Education Association. In 1934, at a meeting of the National Recreation Congress in Washington, D. C., membership on the committee was expanded to add the Amateur Softball Association of America, the National Softball Association, the Catholic Youth Organization, and the Young Men's Hebrew Association.

In 1934 these official rules were published by the American Sports Publishing Company under the title Official Rules of Softball, Playground Baseball, and Diamond Ball. Its foreword announced that the only differences between these rules and those of regulation baseball were:

1. Shorter distances between bases.
2. Smaller bat in length and thickness.
3. Larger ball.
4. Underhand pitching only permitted.
5. Ten players instead of nine.
6. Seven innings instead of nine.
7. Baserunner not permitted to leave his base until pitched ball has passed the batter.
8. Runner could not score on a passed ball or wild pitch.
9. No bunting allowed.<sup>2</sup>

The Joint Rules Committee set the distance between bases at sixty feet for play with the standard, or twelve-inch ball; and forty-five

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur T. Noren, "Joint Rules Committee Has Played Big Part in Development of Softball," Softball (March 1939), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Official Rules of Softball, Playground Baseball, and Diamond Ball (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), p. 5.

feet when the fourteen-inch sphere was used. The pitching distance was set at thirty-seven feet, eight and one-half inches. The batters' boxes were made five feet by three feet.

In 1936 the Committee lifted the ban from spiked shoes. While still recommending the use of rubber-soled footwear, it permitted the use of blunt metal spikes not over three-eighths of an inch long.

The pitching distance for the sixty-foot diamond was increased to forty feet. Pitchers using the windmill delivery then very much in vogue were beginning to have too much of an edge on the offense. The public was calling for more hitting and less strikeouts and this was the rulemakers' first attempt to oblige.<sup>1</sup>

In 1937 the baserunning rule was amended, also to help the offense, by permitting the runner to leave the bag as soon as the ball had left the pitcher's hand instead of waiting until it had passed the home plate.<sup>2</sup>

In 1938 bunting was permitted. Pitchers whose teams wore light gray or white were required to wear a contrasting color.<sup>3</sup>

In 1939 pitchers were barred from wearing white or light gray accessories, sweatshirts, scarfs, or other things. The wearing of a

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<sup>1</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1936), pp. 5-8.

<sup>2</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1937), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1938), p. 3.



mask was made mandatory for catchers. In women's softball, the wearing of a mask and chest protector were both made mandatory. The bunt was taken out of the purview of the infield fly.<sup>1</sup>

In 1940 the pitching distance was lengthened to forty-three feet. The batter's box was enlarged to six by three feet. The catcher had to catch the third strike or the batter became a baserunner, unless first base was occupied with less than two out. The quick return by the pitcher was barred. The pitcher was also compelled to come to a full stop in his delivery immediately before delivering the ball to the batter. The rule restricting the pitcher's uniform was amended to apply only when playing under the lights.<sup>2</sup>

The pitcher's uniform rule was drastically revised in 1941 to make the twirlers look like undertakers. The hurlers' uniforms had to be all black or dark blue, with no letters or trimming of any kind on the front. This applied to day as well as night games. The so-called rocking chair motion by the pitcher was eliminated. An attempt by the third base coacher to draw a throw by running down the baseline would cause the runner on or near third base to be called out for the coacher's interference.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Official Rules of Softball, Playground Baseball and Diamond Ball, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1940), pp. 7-8.

<sup>3</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1941), pp. 3-4.

The equipment rules so far as the bat was concerned were made firm in 1942. Maximum measurements were set at thirty-four inches in length and two and one-eighth inches at its largest diameter. A tolerance of one-sixteenth of an inch was allowed for possible expansion of the wood. The handle was to have a safety grip of cork, tape, or composition material.

Base coaches were restricted to instructing or encouraging their own baserunners. They were barred from making disparaging or insulting remarks to or about opposing players, the umpires, or the spectators, either directly or indirectly.<sup>1</sup>

These rules stood up until 1946 when the pitching distance for girls was established at thirty-four feet, and that for the men continuing at forty-three feet. The batter's box was enlarged to seven by three feet. And, in an effort to help the offense, the bases were shortened to fifty-five feet.<sup>2</sup>

In 1947 the only appreciable rule change was the elimination of the tenth player, or the shortfielder. This definitely proved a help to the offense.<sup>3</sup> The fifty-five foot bases did not prove satisfactory so softball went back to the standard sixty-foot distance in 1948. The

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<sup>1</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1942), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Official Rules of Softball (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1946), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Guide and Rules (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1947), p. 21.

pitching rules were clarified, but not changed, by inclusion of this note: "The body, feet, arms and hands must come to a full and complete stop at the same time, before taking one hand off the ball at the start of the wind-up or backswing."<sup>1</sup> The "undertaker's rule" for pitchers' uniforms was abolished and the twirlers were allowed to wear the uniform of their teams.<sup>2</sup>

In 1950 the men's pitching distance was increased to forty-six feet.<sup>3</sup> In 1952 the women's pitching distance was set at thirty-eight feet. Also, in 1952, the use of more than one revolution in a windmill pitch was barred.<sup>4</sup>

The strike zone was clarified by describing it as "between the batter's armpits and the top of his knees when the batter assumes his natural stance."<sup>5</sup> The infield fly rule was amended to take in only "a fair fly ball, other than a line drive or a bunt, that can reasonably be handled by an infielder."<sup>6</sup>

Diamond ball. The first effort to organize softball on a

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<sup>1</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Leonie, New Jersey: Wells Publishing Company, 1948), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur T. Noren, "Mound Put Back to Forty-Six Feet," Balls and Strikes (December, 1949), 1.

<sup>4</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Guide (Newark, New Jersey: Amateur Softball Association, 1952), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

national, or rather interstate, scale was in 1925 when the National Diamond Ball Association was formed in Minneapolis. The prime mover was Mr. Harold A. Johnson, Assistant Director of Recreation for the Minneapolis Park Board.

This Association continued until the Amateur Softball Association of America was formed in 1933, and even held a large-scale tournament in Milwaukee in 1932. Despite the necessity for reconciling the differences in rules prevalent in nearly every state just before each game, the tournament was considered a success. Forty teams from every section of the United States east of the Rockies took part.

Mr. Johnson left his recreation post in 1934 to enter the ministry and at the present time is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church at Enumclaw, Washington. He is still a softball enthusiast and provided much of the history of diamond ball for this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

In 1916 the Minneapolis Park Board felt that there should be a game that nearly everyone in the city could play. The problem was turned over to Mr. Johnson, who made a four-month study of the rules and extent of baseball, kittenball, and indoor baseball. Out of this study was evolved the game of "Softball."

Rules were printed and equipment designed, the latter being manufactured especially for the new game by Hugo Goldsmith of Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>2</sup> However, when Mr. Johnson tried to promote the game with

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<sup>1</sup>Material obtained from correspondence with Harold A. Johnson, former Director of Recreation of the Minneapolis Park Board, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>"Ancestry of Softball is Traced," Balls and Strikes (October, 1950), 11.

commercial sponsors he met almost universally with the attitude, "when you bring around a regular game we'll get behind it."

By late spring of 1916 he had procured four teams, sponsored and equipped by Minneapolis merchants. A city-wide contest for a name was held in the newspapers. After sifting through over three hundred entries, the appellation "Diamond Ball" was adopted.

In a few short years this four-club diamond ball league had mushroomed into 828 teams and it became necessary for the Minneapolis Park Board to greatly expand its sports program. The Johnson plan had worked better than had been expected. Seven hardball diamonds on Minneapolis' huge recreation center known as the Parade Ground were converted into twenty-four softball diamonds.

The neighboring city of St. Paul instituted a vigorous diamond ball program of its own. The game quickly spread to the neighboring states of Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa, and even to Winnipeg, Canada.

The first twin-city tournament was played in 1918, and by 1925 this had become a regular affair with men, women, juniors, and midgets competing for the bi-city title. The Margaret Bluffers of St. Paul became the first women's champions in this northwest area by taking a two-out-of-three series from the Non-XL's of Minneapolis.

In 1925 a statewide tournament was held by teams from Duluth, Winona, Hibbing, Faribault, and the Red Crowns of Minneapolis. The

Duluthers won by nosing out Winona in the final, 5 to 4.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1927 saw the state championship tourney held at Duluth. Bubbles Cafe of St. Paul was the winner over entries from Albert Lea, Virginia, Duluth, Hibbing, Faribault, and Winona. Minneapolis' city champions boycotted the tournament and played a double-header in Milwaukee at the same time the state finals were being played.

In 1928 two "Minnesota State Championship" tournaments were held, each claiming its winner to be the champions. One meet was held in Minneapolis and the host team, Christian Lindsays, won the title after a spirited series. Pitcher Harry Kolter of Winona started his team off by pitching the first no-hit, no-run game in Minnesota's diamond ball history in blanking the Tonkas 4 to 0.<sup>2</sup>

Another "State Championship" tournament at St. Cloud announced as its entries Hibbing, Rochester, Virginia, Duluth, St. Paul, Winona, St. Cloud, Crookston, Ramsey County, and Chisholm. No account of the playing of this tournament was to be found in the Minnesota newspapers after the original announcement.

In 1929 the National Diamond Ball Association sponsored a tournament for the Northwest Championship. Christian Lindsays of Minneapolis won this tournament over teams from Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Winona, Minnesota; Green Bay, Wisconsin; Fargo, North Dakota; LaCrosse, Wisconsin; and Grand Forks, North Dakota.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), pp. 68-71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-71.

In the meantime Minnesota state dissenters were holding a state championship tournament in St. Paul, refusing to recognize the Northwest champion. Playing in this series were Duluth, New Brighton, St. Cloud, and Rochester, Minnesota.

In 1930 the Northwest tournament was held in Minneapolis and won by Fort Dodge, Iowa, over a field of ten teams. Three of these teams were from Minnesota, four from Wisconsin, one from Michigan, and one from Canada. This was the first time a Canadian entry joined the tournament.

In the meantime at Hibbing, Minnesota the other half of the state was having another tournament, this one for the "State Championship" only. A third tournament, also for the "State Championship," was announced by the Minneapolis paper as being staged at Crookston, Minnesota, with fourteen entries.<sup>1</sup>

These title disputes, together with the conflict in rules in every section of the country, emphasized the need for a strong national body to take charge in standardizing and stabilizing the situation. Three years later this body came into being when the Amateur Softball Association of America was organized at the World's Fair in Chicago.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE AMATEUR SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION

The National Diamond Ball Association was disbanded in 1933. Not long afterward Harold Johnson, the promoter and all-around manager of this Association, left Minneapolis to enter the ministry. But the determining factor in the disbanding of the original organization was the formation in the summer of 1933 of the Amateur Softball Association of America, which has subsequently proven to be the big stabilization and promotion force of modern streamlined softball. This organization had more solid backing than any of its predecessors, particularly in the field of newspaper publicity, which contributed greatly to its success.

Mr. Leo Fischer, a sports writer for the Chicago American paper, and Mr. M. J. Pauley, a Chicago sporting goods salesman, conceived the idea of organizing the softball teams of every state into cohesive state organizations which would, in turn, be welded into a national body.<sup>1</sup> In this way the softball rules could be made uniform throughout the United States and Canada, and definite state, national, and world champions could be determined. There would be no impasses like the tournaments in Minnesota and elsewhere with their conflicting "champions."

In order to start this organization at the "grass roots" each man

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<sup>1</sup>Leo H. Fischer, "Two Decades of Amateur Softball Association Progress," Balls and Strikes (January, 1952), 1-7.



took one-half of the United States and visited each state by automobile. They invited the outstanding teams of every state possible to participate in a real national tournament at Chicago in August, 1933, under the auspices of the World's Fair and the Chicago American newspaper. The Century of Progress Exposition was induced to sponsor the tournament and to provide a playing field within the grounds of the Fair itself. The expenses were underwritten by the businessmen of the city.

After making the necessary arrangements, Mr. Fischer and Mr. Pauley had only ten days left in which to contact the various state teams, but they were successful to the extent that forty men's and ten women's teams traveled to Chicago for the tournament.<sup>1</sup>

The competition was divided into three classes: fast ballers, slow pitchers, and women's. A fourteen-inch ball was used, and the "sudden death" type of tournament was decided upon. The games were of seven-inning duration until the semi-finals were reached, and from that point on were lengthened to nine innings.<sup>2</sup>

On the opening day of this tournament the Chicago American stated:

It is the largest and most comprehensive tournament ever held in the sport which has swept the country like wildfire. Champions will be decided in three classes- fast pitching, slow pitching, and girls.

Fifty title winners from Colorado to New Jersey, and from Minnesota to Florida, have sent in their entries. Admission will be free to those within the grounds of A-Century-of-Progress. The diamond is located on Northerly Island, near the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

east tower of the Sky Ride and bleacher space is available for thousands of spectators.<sup>1</sup>

The first round of play was witnessed by seventy thousand spectators. The J. J. Gills team of Chicago won the fast ball competition; Cuyler Missions of Chicago, the slow pitch championship; and the Great Northern Laundryettes of Chicago completed the "sweep" by winning the girls' title.

One month later another group in Chicago held an "International and World's Fair Softball Finals" tournament in the Chicago Stadium. It was said that twenty-eight Chicago, seven other Illinois, and sixteen teams from different states had been selected from a field of 5,641 towns, but the writer was unable to find any further information as to the actual playing or outcome of this second competition.<sup>2</sup>

The 1934 Official Softball Guide, authored by the Playground Association and published by the American Sports Publishing Company of New York, editorialized on what it called "the associations, organizations, and committees which have sprung up in every direction"<sup>3</sup> to control the game:

Many of these are reputable organizations backed by men who are desirous solely of furthering the interest of the sport. Others are sponsored by promoters who see in the great popularity of this game an opportunity to commercialize it and secure a financial return.

It will be interesting to watch during the coming year which of these organizations promoting state, national, and international tournaments continues to exist, continues to grow, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1934), p. 4.

continues to give leadership in tournament play.<sup>1</sup>

The 1935 Official Softball Guide, issued by the same Playground Association, answered its own speculative query with:

The years of persistent effort, constant promotion and unchanging faith of the believers in Softball proved to have been not in vain, for in 1934 SOFTBALL came into its own. All over America hundreds of leagues and thousands of players enthusiastically accepted this major team game.

The promotional activities of the Amateur Softball Association of America played an important part in stimulating the interest that has been developing for many years. The battle for recognition of this splendid game is over. Softball has won a place among America's foremost sports.<sup>2</sup>

That first tournament in 1933, while not spectacular, was a sound one. It provided the basis for a permanent national softball association which is among the best in the field of participant sports throughout the world.

First and foremost, this tournament developed beyond doubt the well-known fact that there was a definite need for standardization of the rules. For example, the team from Florida reported that it had played ten games in ten different states on its way to Chicago and found itself playing under ten different sets of rules.

Subsequently, the Amateur Softball Association was formally organized with Mr. Fischer as its President, without remuneration, and Mr. Pauley as Executive Secretary, with a salary of \$2,600 a year for the full-time job. Its headquarters were established at the Morrison

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), p. 7.

Hotel in Chicago.<sup>1</sup>

William Randolph Hearst contributed seven thousand dollars toward the expenses of the 1934 tournament and gave the event widespread publicity in his newspapers. The fields were provided by the Chicago Park District, principally Lincoln Park. At the conclusion of the tournament it was found that hotel bills had been paid for one thousand players, comprising the thirty-two entries from twenty-five states and Canada. Every section of the nation, with the exception of the far west, was represented, with each team paying its own traveling expenses.<sup>2</sup>

The year 1935 saw the entry list increased to thirty-three states, with forty-two men's and fourteen women's teams. Each team had won its title in a championship tournament of a state or metropolitan area with a population of five hundred thousand or more.<sup>3</sup>

The 1936 Softball World Series was shifted to Soldiers' Field in Chicago. By this time forty-one of the forty-eight states, together with ten metropolitan districts, had been organized by the Amateur Softball Association.

This particular competition was marked by the performance of one, Harold "Shifty" Gears, pitcher for the title-winning Rochester, New York team as he "fanned" twenty of twenty-one consecutive batters in one of the games. This record has not been equaled in Amateur Softball Association tournament play.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Lowell, "The Sport of 15,000,000," Elizabeth Daily Journal (September 5, 1937), 7.

In December, 1937, the Amateur Softball Association was invited to affiliate with the Amateur Athletic Union, which it was happy to do. Secretary Pauley reported that he considered this affiliation highly important.

Under it (the affiliation) only Amateur Softball Association champions, either district, state, or world, are recognized as amateur champions by any sports body controlling other amateur sports.

Players playing softball on ASA member teams, and living up to the amateur requirements of the ASA, automatically have their amateur standing in other sports protected, and this is the only way that an athlete can be sure of such protection when playing softball.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Pauley's report also listed 92,545 softball teams in the United States, which played 1,850,900 games before 185,090,000 spectators during the 1936 season.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1937 tournament eighty-eight teams from United States and Canada participated. This was the first series to be broadcast over a national network, with both Columbia and the National Broadcasting Company doing play-by-play broadcasts of the important games. This year also saw the inauguration of tournament official records for throwing, hitting, and running.<sup>3</sup>

The 1938 World Championships at Soldier's Field in Chicago drew entries from fifty-six men's and thirty-four women's teams from

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<sup>1</sup>M. J. Pauley, "Pauley Reports," Softball (January, 1938), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1938), pp. 6-11.

forty-three states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. At its annual meeting that year the Commissioner's Council of the Amateur Softball Association created a Board of Governors to assist in the management of the now far-flung affairs. At this meeting it was also announced that the mimeographed periodicals of Balls and Strikes, the official organ of the Association, were to be issued in printed form. Celebrating this event, a souvenir edition containing thirty-two pages of pictures and history of the development of softball was published and distributed.<sup>1</sup>

Ninety teams competed in the seventh tournament in 1939. Fifteen thousand fans turned out for the finals. A new touch was added when most of the entries joined a "Parade of States" in full uniform around the Stadium during opening ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> This year also marked the retirement of Mr. Fischer as president of the organization he had helped to found in 1933. Mr. Wilbur Landis of Detroit was elected to succeed him, but Mr. Pauley continued into his seventh term as secretary-treasurer.<sup>3</sup>

The 1940 World Championships were staged in Detroit, leaving Chicago for the first time. Two beautiful city parks, Belle Isle and Northwestern High School, provided multiple softball diamond layouts as settings for the games. There were sixty-nine men's and fifty-two

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1939), pp. 71-73.

<sup>2</sup>"Greatest Season Ends," Softball (October, 1939), 1.

<sup>3</sup>"W. E. Landis Is New President of A.S.A.," Softball (October, 1939), 1.

women's teams participating that year.<sup>1</sup>

The war clouds were gathering and Pearl Harbor was but three months away when the 1941 tournament was held in Detroit for the second year. The World War II eventually changed the softball picture considerably but the Amateur Softball Association weathered these changes better than any of the opposing groups which had sprung up in similar sports organizations.<sup>2</sup> Wartime restrictions on travel drastically curtailed activity in the 1942 tournament but this problem was partially solved by dividing the United States into fifteen regions and holding regional tournaments in places which required a minimum of travel.<sup>3</sup> This emergency handling of the situation greatly decreased the entry lists and made it possible for a "double knockout" tournament to be held. This eliminated the ever-present possibility of an inferior team winning the championship by a stroke of fortune instead of superior playing ability as in the case of the "single knockout" tournaments.<sup>4</sup>

The regional tournaments with their "double knockout" type of elimination proved to be so much more satisfactory than the previous method that they have been continued to the present time. It is unlikely

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<sup>1</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1941), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1942), pp. 23-25.

<sup>3</sup>American Softball Association, Official Guide (Chicago: Amateur Softball Association, 1943), p. 70.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

that the Association will ever return to the old way of crowding the field with one hundred or more teams at the same time or place.

The war continued to dominate the national scene in 1943, but the authorities in Washington, D. C. gave full sanction to both baseball and softball on the home front, with necessary reservations, because they considered these activities vital to civilian morale and health. The 1943 tournament was again held in Detroit. The manpower shortage caused the disbanding of thousands of civilian teams but this shortage was made up by hundreds of defense plant nines and sixty-seven thousand service teams which engaged in active playing of the game.<sup>1</sup>

The 1944 tourney was shifted to Cleveland, where a lighted field with covered grandstand and bleachers with a seating capacity for six thousand spectators, an electric scoreboard, a public address system, and a sodded field welcomed the participants.<sup>2</sup> The year 1944 also saw the first National Industrial Amateur Softball Tournament, which was sanctioned by the Amateur Softball Association and was held at Detroit. A junior softball tournament was also held at Columbus, Ohio.<sup>3</sup>

The United States was entering the final phase of the war when seventeen men's and fourteen women's teams were qualifying in the regional

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<sup>1</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1944), pp. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Guide and Rules (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1945), pp. 5-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



tournaments for the finals in Cleveland in September of 1945. Two industrial tournaments were also held during that year. It was announced that the total number of teams competing in Amateur Softball Association leagues during the summer of 1945 was six hundred thousand.<sup>1</sup>

The passing of Mr. Pauley from the Amateur Softball Association picture as its secretary-manager in 1946 marked the end of an era for softball. However, he had helped to create its firm foundation which is still standing at the present time. He was replaced by Mr. Gene Martin of Newark, New Jersey who, practically speaking, became the general manager of the Association.<sup>2</sup>

The 1946, 1947, and 1948 tournaments were more or less routine as the Association continued to function efficiently and with little or no controversy. The 1949 season was highlighted by a game played at Kenosha, Wisconsin, between the Italian American Club and one of its city opponents which lasted for forty-two innings and is the longest game in the record books of the Amateur Softball Association.<sup>3</sup> The following year saw no new developments insofar as the Association was concerned. However, at the annual meeting in 1949 the Association affiliated with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and with its member Youth Amateur Softball Association. The Youth group was formed for boys

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<sup>1</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1946), pp. 4-7.

<sup>2</sup>Official Softball Rules (Louisville, Kentucky: Hillerich and Bradsby Company, 1947), pp. 4-7.

<sup>3</sup>"Can You Top This?" Balls and Strikes (December, 1949), 7.

between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, inclusive, with a Junior group for boys between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, inclusive.<sup>1</sup>

During the year 1950 a general softball survey was made by the Amateur Softball Association. This survey showed 65,210 registered teams with 978,150 players, which was a small percentage of the total teams actually playing. These teams comprised a total of 8,153 leagues. It was also found that there were 3,620 lighted parks in 16,203 playing areas.<sup>2</sup> Michigan had the highest number of players, 17,216, registered with the Amateur Softball Association affiliated state association; and Ontario, Canada, had the highest number of teams, 1,403. Ohio led in the number of registered and nonregistered teams with 5,023, and in over-all players with 80,368. New Jersey had the most leagues, 730, and Ohio the most lighted fields with 186. The United States Rubber Company conducted a spectator survey at the same time which indicated that one hundred twenty-five million people saw softball games played in 1950.<sup>3</sup>

The Amateur Softball Association's contributions to softball are manifold. It has standardized the rules and has governed the sport for twenty-three years. The Association was the first to govern the sport at its beginning and it is still the governing body for softball in the

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<sup>1</sup>"A. S. A. Aids V. F. W. Program," Balls and Strikes (May, June, 1949), 1, 8.

<sup>2</sup>Frank G. Menke, The Encyclopedia of Sports (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company, 1953), p. 805.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

United States. Under its auspices annual sectional tournaments are held throughout the United States. The winners of these tournaments, the championship team of the previous year, and the champion team of the city in which the national finals are held, also meet in a tournament called the "Softball World Series," to decide the softball championship for the year.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOFTBALL IN THE FORTY-EIGHT STATES

Alabama. Softball was launched in Alabama in 1936 literally from the grass roots. Mr. Bob Shelton, Recreation Supervisor of Birmingham, was named Commissioner for the state. He appointed Mr. B. O. Hargrove, a retired fire chief, as Metropolitan Commissioner for Birmingham. Between them they induced the Downtown Lion's Club to raise funds to light a softball field. As a result, eighteen teams were organized in the City League that first year.

The first state tournament was held in the fall of 1936. Although there were twenty-four women's teams playing under the supervision of the Birmingham Recreation Department, no state champion in that division was determined.

In 1937 there were twenty-five men's leagues and six women's leagues operating in the state, and by 1938 the number of teams in Alabama had jumped to over three hundred. This same level of participation has held up to and including the present time.<sup>1</sup>

Arizona. Arizona today boasts of its sunshine, production of lettuce, and its girl softball teams. Softball got its start in the summer of 1932, mainly through the efforts of Mr. Arlie Galbraith of City Recreation, Mr. Ford Hoffman, of Public Schools, Miss Laura Herron, City Parks,

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<sup>1</sup>"Alabama Ready for Big Season," Softball (March, 1950), 2.

and Mr. Ben Spaulding.

Arizona teams have established many records in national softball competition. The remarkable growth of the game in this state was due largely to the great number of lighted softball fields. There were at least one hundred fifty of these at the latest count, fifty-one of which are located in Phoenix, a softball stronghold in the Southwest.

Commissioner Hoffman is assuring the future of the game by development of a "peewee" program with four hundred teams of junior players competing in one hundred leagues.<sup>1</sup>

Arkansas. In 1933 a softball team from Little Rock was invited to participate in a tournament in Chicago. At that time there were only fourteen teams in Arkansas, but participation in the tournament created a tremendous interest in the sport and within two years the fourteen teams had grown to two hundred fifty, with 3,750 players, and an estimated spectator attendance of two hundred fifty thousand. Mr. Otto Smith, a postal employee, was the first Commissioner and still holds that position.<sup>2</sup>

California. Softball had been played in an unorganized way in California all through the 1920's, but it was not until 1930 that a league was organized and any attempt was made to develop softball as a

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<sup>1</sup>"Phoenix Ramblers Challenge Foes to Top These Marks," Balls and Strikes (January, 1954), 1-4.

<sup>2</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1939), pp. 71-72.

special game. *South Pacific Coast*

In 1930 the San Gabriel Valley Girls' Softball League was formed, thus giving to the opposite sex the honor of launching softball in California on an organized scale. Up to the present time the women's teams from California have always been in the top brackets in the world series competition.<sup>1</sup>

In 1933 the game began to spread throughout the state, with San Francisco leading the way by holding the first metropolitan tournament in 1934. Stockton became the softball center of Northern California as that city began building night softball stadiums to reach a present total of eight such plants. Consequently, all tournaments were played there until 1946.<sup>2</sup>

Softball mushroomed throughout the state, with other cities such as Berkeley, San Jose, and Oakland leading the way. When the Amateur Softball Association was first organized, California was split in two due to the large number of teams in the state. In 1939 the two halves were consolidated under one Commissioner, Mr. Doug Shumway, Los Angeles Chief of Recreation. However, the state was again split in 1941 with Mr. Shumway being made Commissioner for Southern California and Mr. James P. Lang, Commissioner for Northern California. In 1945 the organizations were divided into two regions. The South Pacific Coast Region took in

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<sup>1</sup>"Monterey Park Gals Hope to Retain First San Gabriel Title in Eighteen Years," Balls and Strikes (April, 1952), 8.

<sup>2</sup>"Strong Loops Produce Best Softball in Years for North California," Balls and Strikes (June, 1952), 5.

Arizona and the North Pacific Coast Region included Nevada. Today the North Pacific Region has three hundred sixty registered teams, and the South Pacific Region, about four hundred.<sup>1</sup>

Colorado. Colorado is one of America's pioneer softball states. In respect to organizing the sport on a statewide scale, it is probably second only to Minnesota. In 1926 Mr. Homer Hoisington of Denver, then State Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, organized a group of twelve citizens of Lamar to study the problems involved in standardizing this popular game as it was being played around the state. The Colorado Amateur Softball Association was formed, with its first function being to adopt the official name of "Softball" for use throughout the state. Uniform rules were then adopted for all teams, and incorporated under a "Declaration of Principles" as follows:

1. Noncommercialized recreation.
2. All ages and all races.
3. Good sportsmanship.
4. Local leagues with nonplaying president and officials.
5. Local league play most important; district and state tournaments secondary.
6. Rules as near like baseball as possible.
7. Rules by referendum vote of entire state.
8. Every section of Colorado served.
9. Small as well as large towns encouraged to play the game.<sup>2</sup>

In 1928 Mr. Walker Hakanson of the Denver Young Men's Christian Association was named Commissioner for Colorado, and since that time the

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<sup>1</sup>Material obtained from James P. Lang, Past President, Amateur Softball Association of California, in letter of January 3, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Hakanson, "The Evolution of Softball," Softballers (June, 1938), 5.

sport has boomed to great heights. Mr. Hakanson represented Colorado at the organization meeting of the Amateur Softball Association of America when it was formed in 1933.

The state's first night softball park was erected in 1931, and it now has over one hundred such lighted fields.<sup>1</sup>

Connecticut. Softball was started in Connecticut in 1932 with Mr. Harold Dow as the first Commissioner. Since that time it has burgeoned until there are two hundred fourteen men's and seven women's teams registered with the Amateur Softball Association. Unaffiliated teams total two hundred twenty men's and sixty-four women's.

It was in 1947 that softball became "big time" when Mr. Bill Simpson of the Raybestos Company of Stratford was instrumental in erection of a Memorial Field, built in memory of and dedicated to the employees of Raybestos who had lost their lives in World War II.

This field, on which the 1952 Men's World Softball Series was played, is considered a model one. The site was carved out of a rock-studded marshland filled in at spots. The lighting system is considered perfect and the fieldhouse is excellent. The four thousand-seat plant is surrounded by a ten-foot wire fence, all points of which are exactly two hundred fifty feet from home plate. An electrically operated scoreboard, dugouts for teams, and a modern press box complete the picture.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. John Lindquist, Commissioner of Amateur Softball Association of Connecticut.



Since 1942 Connecticut teams have been at the top in competition in both the men's and women's divisions.

Delaware. Softball was started in Delaware in 1933 as an extension program of the Young Men's Christian Association physical education department. Mr. Claude M. Alexander, associate physical director, and Mr. Clifford E. Garvine, director of physical education, started the movement, both men pitching on the first teams as an added incentive.

In the first year of the sport there were two leagues of six teams each. This has grown to the fourteen hundred players on one hundred teams which were registered by the Delaware Amateur Softball Association in 1953. Mr. Claude Alexander was appointed the first state Commissioner and after overseas duty with the Red Cross during World War II was re-appointed to his former duties. Women's softball was begun in 1946 and its growth has progressed proportionately with that of the men's.<sup>1</sup>

District of Columbia. Streamlined baseball came to the District of Columbia in 1934 through the medium of the William Randolph Hearst newspapers, which backed its organization in the nation's capital. Mr. Morris Bealle organized the first softball team to play in Washington, staged the first game with a group of students at the Catholic University, and started the first league in the Capital City circuit. He obtained the help of the chairmen of both the Senate and House committees of the

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<sup>1</sup>"Delaware—Small in Size but a Giant in Softball," Balls and Strikes (September, October, 1953), 4.

District of Columbia in getting the Community Center officials to permit the league to use public property for the game.

Mr. Bealle helped to organize the first Commission in 1934. Then in 1941 he built the first and only night stadium in Washington ever available to the softball players of the city. From that time on the caliber of softball began to improve and for six years no District of Columbia team ever lost the Central-Atlantic Regional tournament. In 1947 the stadium site was sold in a real estate speculation wave and every other available site in metropolitan Washington was rezoned residential, which blocked the building of this civic enterprise any place else. Since then no Washington men's team has won a regional.

Washington's colored population is 40 per cent of the whole, but until recently segregation was effective in all but public transportation. Integration in Amateur Softball Association softball was effected in 1951, mainly through the efforts of Dr. Theodore R. Williams, a government scientist and leader of his race. This integration was effected in the reverse as the Banneker Recreation Center was the only public playground in the city with lights, and it was out of bounds for the white population. Mr. Williams presented the Recreation Center authorities with an overwhelming group of signed petitions from the colored people requesting and demanding that the white players be allowed to use their field at night. It then followed that colored teams were taken into the District of Columbia Association tournaments.

Women's softball was launched in 1936 by Mr. James Hitchins of

the Agriculture Department.<sup>1</sup>

Florida. Softball had its beginning in Florida during the real estate recession in 1925. Mr. C. L. Varner, Orlando Recreation Director, started the game on the city's sandlots and parks as an escape from the pessimistic talk of that year.

In 1928 the City Recreation Department of Miami lighted its Riverside Park and organized two leagues which played there nightly. The twenty-fifth anniversary of Miami softball was celebrated in 1953 by holding the World Championships at the new and elaborate Moore Field and the University of Miami's lighted baseball park near the Orange Bowl.<sup>2</sup>

In 1930 the recreation workers of Jacksonville organized a league of bank workers, which was followed by an open twilight league. In 1931 the grammar school children began to imitate their elders and agitated for a lighted field which was built that summer, thus creating a boom in softball. However, at that time, the game was called "Diamond Ball" and forty-five-foot bases were used. After competing in the World's Fair tournament of the Amateur Softball Association in 1933, the name was changed officially to "Softball" and the sixty-foot bases were adopted.

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<sup>1</sup>"D. C. Snorts at Tourney Handicaps," Balls and Strikes (August, 1951), 9.

<sup>2</sup>"Miami Has Sunshine, Men's '52 Tourney, and Lots of Softball," Balls and Strikes (April, 1953), 5.

In the meantime in Orlando Mr. Varner continued to be active in the game and had built the sport up to where one of the three city softball parks had seats for five thousand spectators, most of which were well filled three nights a week.

Mr. Pierce Gahan of St. Petersburg was Florida's first and only Commissioner of softball, and the game has continued to flourish under his guidance.<sup>1</sup>

Georgia. Georgia softball started in Atlanta in 1933 but was confined to this southern metropolis until it began to branch out into the other counties in 1938. As a result, all tournaments were held in Atlanta until 1949 when other large cities began to get the state title play on a rotation basis.

Mr. Oscar Brock of the Atlanta Young Men's Christian Association was the first Commissioner and brought the state through the trying formative years. In 1947 the metropolitan area of Atlanta was separated from the state association. In 1954 there were one hundred affiliated men's teams in Atlanta and seventy-five in the rest of the state proper; there were fifteen women's teams in the state, and two in Atlanta.<sup>2</sup>

Idaho. Softball did not get started in Idaho until 1938 when Mr. Austin Jones of the Pocatello Railroad Young Men's Christian Association

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<sup>1</sup>J. B. Lemon, "Softball in the South," Softballers (March, 1938), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. A. H. Bishop, Commissioner of the state of Georgia, 1954.

took over the responsibility and began to organize teams and leagues for affiliation with the Amateur Softball Association. The game has developed more slowly in this state than some others, but with the advent of women's softball interest has picked up and the future should show more of an increase.<sup>1</sup>

Illinois. Chicago was the cradle of softball. It was also the site of the first world tournament held by the Amateur Softball Association and the headquarters of this dominant organization the first twelve years of its existence.

Softball boomed and bloomed in Chicago and in 1937 it spread to downstate Illinois, with Litchfield, Peoria, Springfield, Danville, and Rock Island leading the parade. However, since 1944 an unusual apathy has developed in the city which cradled and developed one of the greatest of all spectator sports. Beginning in 1940 the fast-pitch variety of softball began to wane and these teams almost disappeared completely after 1944, with the exception of the National Fastball League.

Slow-pitching has become popular in the "Windy City" and this type of softball has something like two thousand teams organized into over three hundred leagues.

During World War II two professional women's leagues sprang up in the Chicago area. One league called its game baseball and the other,

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<sup>1</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Newark, New Jersey: Amateur Softball Association, 1954), p. 88.

softball. The playing was identical, however, except that the former used the overhand pitch and the latter, the orthodox softball pitch.

"Old timers" say that the modern type of softball originated in Chicago at the turn of the century. The high schools had a league which played indoors with a seventeen-inch ball. The first organized tournament in these leagues was in 1911, and in 1914 the Park Board took the fast-growing game outdoors. Bases were lengthened from twenty-seven to thirty-five feet, the ball decreased to sixteen inches, and both slow and fast pitch ball was played. In 1920 the Park Board introduced the twelve-inch ball and through the 1920's sponsored the game, aiding and developing it in every way possible.<sup>1</sup>

Indiana. Softball was played in Indiana as early as 1932, particularly in the cities of South Bend, Brazil, and Indianapolis, and a state tournament was held in that year. The state affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association in 1936 with Mr. Jack Ledden of the South Bend Tribune as its first Commissioner.<sup>2</sup>

Iowa. As this thesis is emphasizing the development of softball in Iowa, this information is presented in detail in the following chapter.

Kansas. Twenty years ago the only softball played in Kansas was that promoted by churches and Young Men's Christian Associations, and

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Charles McCord, State Commissioner of Illinois, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Bill Jackson, "Softball Began in Overalls and Barefoot in Indiana--Now It's Big League," Balls and Strikes (July, 1951), 4.

participated in by their enthusiastic members. The change came in 1939 when the Gas and Electric Company of Wichita constructed a lighted softball field with two thousand seats under the management of Mr. E. B. McGrew. Mr. McGrew was shortly afterwards appointed Commissioner for the state by the Amateur Softball Association of America.

Since that time softball has grown faster than the sunflower in Kansas. Nearly every town and hamlet in the state now has its lighted softball field. Particularly well-appointed parks, with seating capacities of four thousand or more, have been constructed in Topeka, Sterling, Great Bend, Hutchinson, Clay Center, and Manhattan. Over seventy-five hundred men and women, divided into more than five hundred teams, now compete under Amateur Softball Association rules in Kansas and its seven softball districts.<sup>1</sup>

Kentucky. Softball in Kentucky started in the Newport-Covington area in 1930. From there it quickly spread to the state's one hundred nineteen counties. Mr. John Deaver of Shiveley has been the Commissioner since 1935 and now has three hundred teams affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association. There are hundreds of other non-affiliated teams playing throughout the state in church and recreational fields.

The sport was inaugurated in the early 1930's in Louisville mainly as a playground activity. It had grown to such proportions that in 1949 the city was formed into a separate metropolitan area with Mr. William

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. E. B. McGrew, State Commissioner of Kansas, 1954.

A. Moore of the city's recreation department as its Commissioner. Starting with only four leagues, the softball setup has grown so that in 1953 fifty leagues were operating with the winners competing for the metropolitan title.<sup>1</sup>

Louisiana. Mr. Herbert Paillet of New Orleans can claim the credit for organization of softball in Louisiana. The game had been played sporadically on the playgrounds of New Orleans until 1932 when Mr. Paillet took a Young Men's Christian Association team to the national tournament at Milwaukee. Returning to Louisiana, he stopped in Chicago to discuss the formation of a worldwide organization to stabilize the rules of softball and to determine the state and national champions. It was the following year that the Amateur Softball Association was formed. Mr. Paillet was the first Commissioner for the state of Louisiana.

At the present time there are two hundred ten teams in Louisiana proper, with fifty-four in New Orleans. Shreveport has the most model municipal organization with eight softball fields equipped with lights, electric scoreboards, public address systems, a press box, ample seats for spectators, and grass fields in excellent condition.<sup>2</sup>

Maine. Softball started in Maine in the midsummer of 1933. Its first Commissioner was Mr. B. E. Davis of Portland. Maine is one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Newark, New Jersey: Amateur Softball Association, 1953), p. 84.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Herbert Paillet, State Commissioner for Louisiana, and Mr. Ben Turcan, Metropolitan Commissioner, 1954.



coldest states in America and has a shorter outdoor season than most of the states. Softball is not as well developed here as in some of the other sections. It began in Portland where eight teams were in action the first year. In 1936 the state association was formed and there are now one hundred teams in the organization.<sup>1</sup>

Maryland. Softball had been played in Maryland many years before the advent of the Amateur Softball Association. It was called by various names, principally "Playground Ball" and "Diamond Ball," and was sponsored by the Playground Athletic League of Baltimore. Mr. Fred Crosby became the first Commissioner in 1938.<sup>2</sup>

Massachusetts. Softball was launched in the state of Massachusetts as early as 1933 by Mr. Pat Rooney of North Attleboro, but it was not until 1940 that play reached a level on which the state champions were able to compete against the best in the land at the World Series in Detroit.

As of 1953 a survey showed seven hundred twenty-one teams in ninety-four Massachusetts cities and towns, with a total of eighty-eight leagues and 3,888 registered players.

Boston was made a separate area in 1939 with Mr. Duncan Russell as Metropolitan Commissioner. Only four teams competed in its first

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Dow, "The North Atlantic Region Digs In," Softballers (June, 1938), 11.

<sup>2</sup>Nathan Paskoff, "Our Maryland," Softballers (April, May, 1938), 22-23.

citywide tournament as compared with sixty-one in 1953. Softball in Boston is at present sponsored by the Community Recreation Service, a Red Feather agency and of recent years has been self-supporting.<sup>1</sup>

Michigan. Michigan softball dates back to its earlier beginnings, third only to Chicago and Minneapolis. Children and adults alike were playing what they called playground baseball, indoor baseball, and kitten-ball in Owosso in 1897, two years after the "Kittens" were organized in Minneapolis.<sup>2</sup> It is said that Alpena entered the field in 1907 and began playing Owosso for the "State Championship" at that time. The game spread downstate to Detroit where, by 1919, softball was an integral factor in the employee relations program of many huge industrial plants in the Motor City. Naturally, the game spread to the city's many playgrounds.

The first "windmill pitch" ever seen in softball was thrown by Mike Lutonski in Detroit in 1922. The other team declared it illegal and was upheld by the city playground officials. Nevertheless, it became so popular that the officials were forced to reverse their decision and declare it legal.

During the 1920's there was much confusion about the rules. The main point of difference was in the effort of some groups to adapt the old indoor game to outdoor play, while other groups attempted to fit

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Albert Rheault, State Commissioner of Massachusetts, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p. 14.

regulation baseball to smaller areas of play. The organization of the Amateur Softball Association in 1933 brought about standardization of the rules which all groups were willing to adopt. That year saw over one thousand teams playing the new game in Detroit, with some games drawing crowds of five thousand spectators.

With the great stimulus given the game by the new program, 1934 found the playgrounds of Detroit entirely inadequate to meet the demands. Many schoolyards and private properties were added to the regular playground system and one hundred fifty softball diamonds were placed under permit regulations. Seventy-four leagues were registered in 1934 with playground authorities. Over two thousand teams were divided into leagues of from four to two hundred teams each, with some thirty thousand players taking part in these schedules.

By 1938, five thousand teams had registered with the Detroit Playground Department. Slow-pitch softball began to be used but the greater number of teams retained the standard variety.<sup>1</sup> The peak enrollment of teams in the state was in 1950 when 1,148 nines registered for tournament play.<sup>2</sup>

Minnesota. Softball's birth and adolescence in Minnesota is treated fully in an earlier chapter of this study.<sup>3</sup> As shown, Mr. Lou

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<sup>1</sup>Seth Whitmore, "Cites Growth," Softball (September, 1938), 18-19.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Dan Lipinski, Metropolitan Commissioner for Detroit, Michigan, 1954.

<sup>3</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), pp. 68-71.

Rober's Fire Department "Kittens" started the ball rolling in 1895. The Minneapolis Recreation Department officially recognized the game in 1913 by including softball in its citywide program. In 1915 St. Paul, just across the river from Minneapolis, found softball such a big recreation item that a city tournament was staged.<sup>1</sup>

By 1923 the game had grown to such an extent that the Playground Department interested a number of businessmen and sports enthusiasts in forming the St. Paul Municipal Softball Association. Forty teams were entered in various municipal leagues that year, which also saw the organization of the first girls' league. Ten years later this Association had two hundred forty-seven teams registered, and one hundred sixty other teams played in various playground and church leagues.

The first Minnesota state tournament was held in 1925 with games being played in Duluth, St. Paul, and Minneapolis. Minnesota refused to recognize the newly formed Amateur Softball Association in 1933 and would not send a team to the national tournament. By 1937 they decided to recognize the Association and, while refusing to affiliate directly, nevertheless sent teams to compete in the World Series. It was not until 1952 that Minnesota officially joined the Amateur Softball Association and Mr. Einar Nelson of the Minneapolis Park Board was named Commissioner.

In 1953 organized softball in Minnesota had registered six

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), pp. 68-71.

hundred eighteen men's and one hundred twenty women's teams. Young Men's Christian Association, church, and playground teams accounted for twice as many more. The many lighted softball parks and stadiums in Minnesota have helped to make the Gopher State one of America's leading softball centers. In 1954 Minneapolis was selected to be host to the men's world's softball tournament.<sup>1</sup>

Missouri. The Young Men's Christian Associations have been the big promotional element in Missouri softball. The first league was recorded in 1924. Mr. Fred Hoffman of the St. Joseph Young Men's Christian Association was appointed the Commissioner in 1936 and has been responsible for a great deal of the game's growth in Missouri.

The Kansas City Recreation Division created the first large softball organization in Missouri with two thousand adult players divided into fifteen leagues of six teams each. St. Louis then caught the softball fever and the Municipal Athletic Association included the game in its major curriculum in 1933. By 1935 the Kansas City Recreation Division had swelled its list of softball players to forty-eight hundred, divided among two hundred fifty teams.

In 1937 the state was organized into ten districts, with the winner of each area competing for the state title. Fifty-six Young Men's Christian Association teams helped stimulate statewide interest in the

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Einar W. Nelson, State Commissioner for Minnesota, 1954.

streamlined sport.<sup>1</sup>

Montana. Montana softball is believed to have started in the late 1920's as the game was flourishing by 1931 in the Billings-Bozeman-Livingston area.

A Montana team first participated in the World Championships in 1935. The first Commissioner for the state was Mr. Walter Morris of Great Falls.

The game is widespread over the state at the present time but the greatest obstacle to further development has been the acquisition of adequate playing fields. For some years a psychological factor which stood in the way of its development was the belief that softball was really "soft," an old man's game and a woman's pastime. Several exponents of the game helped to dispel this false notion and followers of the sport have increased through the years.<sup>2</sup>

Nebraska. Nebraska has the dubious distinction of sending to a national softball tournament the only team which was mistaken for bandits by a town police force and detained as "guests" of the town for a short time before the error was corrected.

Lincoln was the birthplace of Nebraska softball but through the years no one team has dominated the play. Women's softball was started

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Fred Hoffman, State Commissioner for Missouri, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Kenneth Foewell, State Commissioner for Montana, 1954.

in the state in 1936. Mr. R. Wagner of the Omaha Bee-News was the first Commissioner of softball for the state.<sup>1</sup>

Nevada. The great Silver State of Nevada has been somewhat slow in joining the Amateur Softball Association movement in softball. It was not until 1939 that the first Commissioner, Mr. Howard Christiansen of Reno, was appointed. Since that time the game has developed slowly with more teams being organized as time progresses.<sup>2</sup>

New Hampshire. New Hampshire softball had its beginning at Dover in 1936. The game spread very slowly for the next ten years until the teams were organized by Mr. Charles Farrar, City Recreation Director for Keene, and affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association. From 1946 to 1950 the game boomed with rapidity with eighty teams being registered in the latter year.

Softball officials in New Hampshire had three major problems to contend with and to overcome: (1) lack of large industries to sponsor employee teams, (2) reluctance of municipal governments in the recreation field, and (3) a predominant interest in the game of baseball.

At the present time there are twenty affiliated leagues with over three thousand players divided into sixty teams. The communities of Dover, North Conway, Wilton, Franconia, Portsmouth, Nashua, Manchester,

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<sup>1</sup>Floyd Hayes, "Omaha Boasts Twenty-four Softball Leagues," Softball (July, 1939), 2.

<sup>2</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1939), p. 81.

and Keene have the only lighted softball fields.<sup>1</sup>

New Jersey. New Jersey was the first of the Eastern states to take an active interest in softball. It was started in the playground system of Elizabeth in the early 1920's and by 1925 had spread to other parts of the state.

The first state tournament was held in 1933 and the winner entered the World Championship competition in Chicago. Girls' softball started in the early 1930's. At present in New Jersey there are about two hundred sixty thousand players registered with the Amateur Softball Association, divided into two hundred twenty-five leagues throughout the state. Fifteen communities have night softball facilities in addition to Newark, which has fifty-four. Recreation departments, industry, and the Amateur Softball Association have been largely responsible for this growth.<sup>2</sup>

New Mexico. Softball in New Mexico has revolved around Albuquerque, its largest city. Mr. A. J. Murphy is credited with being the father of New Mexico softball, but the state's first Commissioner was Mr. A. E. Frisbie of Gallup.

In 1953 twenty-five teams were registered, including three hundred

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<sup>1</sup>Robert E. Hardy, "Dover Spirit Rekindles New Hampshire Softball," Balls and Strikes (May, 1951), 8.

<sup>2</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Newark, New Jersey: Amateur Softball Association, 1953), p. 113.



players.<sup>1</sup>

New York. Softball is believed to have actually started in New York on the hard concrete cramped courts of New York City's public schools and playgrounds. Manhattan Island's paucity of real estate makes it practically obligatory that the great American game be played on pieces of ground entirely inadequate for the rules of hardball. There is no doubt that the softer and larger ball, the shorter bases and pitching distances, and the underhand pitch were used in these cramped "courts" long before any record exists of what is now known as softball being played in the Empire State.

The first written record dates back to 1931 when a six-team league was organized in Central New York embracing the cities of Syracuse, Auburn, Cortland, Oswego, Utica, and Rome. Mr. Bill Miller was appointed District Commissioner by the Amateur Softball Association in 1933 and hundreds of teams were organized in this area. Mr. Irwin of Rochester was named State Commissioner in 1937 and in the same year New York City was made a separate metropolitan area, as was Buffalo.

In 1935 the Recreation Commission of Mt. Vernon organized two eight-team leagues and barred all hardball players from participating. The stimulus given softball in Mt. Vernon by these major leagues brought into being numerous neighborhood and playground teams.

By 1937 softball had spread to the "southern tier" of counties.

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Fred Olsen, State Commissioner for New Mexico, and Mr. Lou Evans, Metropolitan Commissioner for Albuquerque, 1954.

A tournament was held in Elmira after a summer of spirited play, with teams from Waverly, Addition, Bath, Oswego, Corland, and Hornell participating. In this same year Utica had sixty-six teams, divided into seven classified leagues, industrial, brakemen, businessmen, Catholic Church, civic, fraternal, and commercial. An eighteen-year minimum age limit was placed with 1,320 players registered.

In New York City the Catholic Youth Organization was promoting the game with great success. It had six hundred fifty boys grouped on forty-four teams divided into five leagues. In 1944 Mr. Joe Minella of Syracuse was made State Commissioner. New York City has had difficulty in promoting the game because of the scarcity of real estate without tall buildings. There are only three lighted fields in the Greater New York area and play on these is limited to teams residing in their respective areas. Most of the games have to be played on concrete public school playgrounds. This necessitates special rules such as no sliding, no bunting, and no stealing. The teams fortunate enough to have the use of dirt surfaces have been able to develop better playing and usually monopolize the tournaments. In a population of eight million the New York area has only sixty-five teams at present.

Rochester was more fortunate and was able to develop the game of softball even before it became a major sport in New York and the rest of the United States.

Buffalo has been a metropolitan area since 1934. There are at present sixty-two teams in the city registered with the Amateur Softball Association, and approximately fifteen hundred unregistered teams playing

in church, industrial, fraternal, and playground circles.<sup>1</sup>

North Carolina. It was in 1936 that softball in North Carolina became officially organized under the early program of the Amateur Softball Association and the game in this state has progressed rapidly through the years. In North Carolina, which has been called the cradle of the traditional sport of baseball, the softball game has made outstanding gains in the past five years.<sup>2</sup>

North Dakota. Softball has been played in North Dakota since 1926. The state is divided into Class A and Class B, with the towns of three thousand or more population comprising Class A.

Mr. P. E. Mickelson was the first State Commissioner when North Dakota entered the Amateur Softball Association. In 1930 Grafton was represented in a tournament at Minneapolis where it reached the semi-finals. After entering the Amateur Softball Association a team from Grand Forks reached the semi-finals of a national tournament held at Chicago.

"Mr. Softball" of North Dakota is Mr. Stan Berquam, forty-four years old of Fargo, a pitcher who has been on a state championship team for twenty-three years, somewhat of a record in itself.

Women's softball started late in 1937, but has progressed since

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Sam Contino, State Commissioner for New York, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Smith Barrier, "North Carolina Poised for Year to Top All," Balls and Strikes (April, 1954), 3-6.

that time into an important sports activity in the state.<sup>1</sup>

Ohio. Softball in Ohio has been more notable for the excellence of its women's teams than for its men's. The game was reputed to have started in this state in Dayton in 1928, but in 1934 a Mr. J. R. Dawson of Piqua wrote to the Official Softball Guide of that year that he had been playing softball there for the past twenty years. He also stated that in 1933 it was not uncommon to see three or four thousand of Piqua's nineteen thousand population attending a softball game.

Ohio's first Commissioner was Mr. H. Ross Bunce of the Columbus Young Men's Christian Association. Cleveland began to recognize softball officially in 1932 when the Metropolitan Softball Commission was formed and uniform rules for all city teams were adopted. Forty clubs took part in the first year with most games being played at Lakewood's Elks Softball Stadium, which had the only lighted field available at that time. Four consecutive World Championships were played in this park in the mid-1940's. At the present time there are seventeen night fields in Cleveland.

To Mr. Charles Foster of the Cleveland Recreation Department goes credit for much of softball's success in the Lake City. There are one hundred fifty affiliated teams in that municipality now, although many of them are concentrated in Lakewood, the suburb that first cradled and nourished Cleveland softball.

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Ralph Thompson, State Commissioner for North Dakota, 1954.

In Ohio over twenty-five hundred teams competed in the various city, district, and state tournaments in 1953.<sup>1</sup>

Oklahoma. Softball has been played on the red clay sandlots of Oklahoma since before 1936. Mr. Sid Steen of the Tulsa World was the state's first Commissioner. In 1947 Oklahoma City was made into a separate metropolitan area.

In 1947 Tulsa had only thirty-eight teams, and today they have one hundred twenty-two registered.<sup>2</sup>

Oregon. Softball began in Oregon in 1926 as a result of what at the time seemed an unimportant event. One businessman in Oregon City challenged another to a game between employees of the two firms, and the game unexpectedly attracted a large crowd. The crowd was pleased with what it saw and other teams sprang up. Softball became the best attended sports attraction in that area and it spread all over the state. Portland, Eugene, and Salem were the most enthusiastic communities.

In 1933 a tournament was held between teams of these four cities. As a result of this tournament the Oregon State Softball Association was formed and affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association. The first seven tournaments were held in Salem because of superior playing facilities, but from 1940 to the present they have been rotated between various

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<sup>1</sup>Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Newark, New Jersey: Amateur Softball Association, 1954), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Vernon Tollison, State Commissioner for Oklahoma, 1954.

cities of the state. 1935 established a permanent league for baseball

Portland softball has grown so that it is now a metropolitan area under its own Commissioner. Portland has one of the finest softball setups in the United States, including sixty-five public softball diamonds. Five of these are equipped with lights and are turfed and landscaped like a major league baseball park. Three world tournaments have been held in Portland in the city's Normandale Park, one of the finest softball fields in the world.

In 1935 the city of Portland's Recreation Department brought together all the softball leagues into an association with its first big season opening in the Portland Pacific Coast League baseball park. The city's first lighted softball field was financed from this event. So successful was this plan that for eighteen years it has been a regular feature of Portland's sport life. All softball teams which use city playgrounds are members of the Portland Softball Association. This includes adults and juniors, boys and girls, men and women, totaling in 1953 one hundred thirty men's teams, six women's, fifty-seven boys', and twenty-seven grade schools'. The total registration is approximately three thousand players.<sup>1</sup>

Pennsylvania. The first record of softball play in Pennsylvania was the children's playground program in Reading in 1928. The game was so popular with the adult spectators that the Reading Department of

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Ralph Guynes, State Commissioner for Oregon, 1954.

Public Recreation in 1929 installed a playground league for businessmen, comprising eight teams.<sup>1</sup>

This movement grew and in 1933 it had blossomed into eleven leagues, six eight-team industrial leagues and five playground leagues of twenty teams each. The first city softball tournament was held in Reading.

Not to be outdone by Reading, Allentown organized in 1934 a twelve-team Church League, a six-team Club League, and a six-team Civic circuit, registering in all six hundred twelve players. Seven of the city playgrounds also had their neighborhood leagues.

The following year Mr. M. L. Walters, physical director of the Scranton Young Men's Christian Association, conceived the idea of promoting and developing softball on a statewide basis and affiliating with the new Amateur Softball Association. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh were too big to be included in this, so the Association made them separate independent metropolitan areas. The first Pennsylvania state tournament, with eight district champions participating, was held at Williamsport in 1937.

In the meantime the Wyoming Valley hard coal region was surely but slowly selling softball to the populace. The advertising which hardball enjoyed, through its production of some of the great major league baseball players, made the going tough for a while. A six-team league of Wilkes-Barre bank employees started the ball rolling in 1932.

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1935), p. 72.

One of these players made a remark which was given wide publicity to the effect that "we can go right from our work, play our game, get the beneficial exercise, and be home before our supper is cold. Best of all, we can play the game at a nominal cost."<sup>1</sup>

Pittsburgh proper has seventy-five softball fields, twenty of them being equipped with lights. There are over two hundred smaller cities and towns in the metropolitan Pittsburgh district, fifty-six of them having lighted fields. Three hundred teams, divided into sixty leagues and embracing eight thousand players, are affiliated with the Pittsburgh Association.

Women's softball in Pittsburgh has been nonexistent up to the present time, but the present Commissioner has started a fourteen to seventeen-year old league and expects to have some fine girls' teams in a few years.

Pennsylvania started its own independent softball association in 1933. It was not only independent of the Amateur Softball Association, but also independent of the National Softball Congress, the only existing independent softball organization. The Keystone Amateur Softball Association is thus doubly independent of any other organization.<sup>2</sup>

Rhode Island. Rhode Island softball was organized into an

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Harold Markle, Pennsylvania State Commissioner; Mr. Joseph Rothstein, Philadelphia Metropolitan Commissioner; and Mr. Thomas Mackey, Pittsburgh Metropolitan Commissioner, 1954.



operating unit in Pawtucket in 1935. Mr. Joe Mulligan became the state's first Commissioner. The game has steadily grown in public interest. The 1953 tournament held under lights in Cranston Stadium drew the largest crowds in years. Newport took the game up in 1933 and fielded thirty-two teams, with five hundred twenty-nine players registered.

There are at present one hundred twenty softball teams in Rhode Island affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association.<sup>1</sup>

South Carolina. Softball received its start in South Carolina in 1926 in the town of Florence. Mr. Evans Cannon, secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, made a vacation trip to Canada in 1925 and saw what was then called "Kitten Ball" played on a wide scale and with great enthusiasm on the part of players and spectators alike. He decided that South Carolinians would like the modified game of baseball since it could be played with less expense and on fields and vacant lots entirely inadequate for the parent game. He organized and promoted the sport as long as he remained in Florence, and from this beginning the game spread over the entire state.

Today over one hundred teams are registered with the Amateur Softball Association and more than one thousand others are engaging in play-ground softball under programs carried on by the recreation department of every city in the state.

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. William Forte, State Commissioner for Rhode Island, 1954.

The first Commissioner in the state of South Carolina was Mr. A. B. Fennell, sportswriter for the Columbia State.<sup>1</sup>

South Dakota. According to Mr. J. E. Hill of Aberdeen the game of softball was started in South Dakota in 1923 in his city, but details of this are vague. It is known, however, that the sport was conducted haphazardly until after World War II when Mr. George Moses of Rapid City was appointed as Commissioner with very few experienced softball administrators in the state to assist him. One of these men, Mr. Kenneth Weitin of Sioux Falls, made a thorough survey of the way in which softball was organized, conducted, and operated in other states. As a result of this survey a South Dakota Amateur Softball Association was formed and was affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association, the state being organized into thirty-five districts. Approximately two hundred teams are now registered in the state association.<sup>2</sup>

Tennessee. Softball in the state of Tennessee started simultaneously in two widely separated parts of the state, Chattanooga and Memphis, about 1931. In Chattanooga a league was started by Mr. R. W. Taft, physical director of the Young Men's Christian Association with four teams from that organization and two from the Sunday Schools.

Memphis was in the midst of a depression with the city's street

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Henry C. Turner, State Commissioner for South Carolina, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Ralph Thompson, State Commissioner for South Dakota, 1954.

corners teeming with men out of work. The Recreation Department conceived the idea of making use of its many playgrounds by organizing these young men into softball teams and leagues. The first citywide tournament was held in 1935 with the winner going to the World Championship series at Chicago. Mr. Henry J. Sims of Chattanooga was Tennessee's first Commissioner of softball.

Beginning in 1934 Memphis took the lead in developing the game, due principally to the six lighted fields provided by the Recreation Department. Seventy-five men's and sixteen women's teams were in the field, together with sixty-one boys' and thirty-six girls' teams under sixteen years of age.

In 1937 a great boost was given softball throughout Tennessee by the championship play of a visiting New York team. The team established itself as a great favorite with sports fans in the state and as a result many communities, where softball had been virtually unknown previous to that time, began to promote and develop the sport.<sup>1</sup>

Texas. Austin was the first city in the Lone Star State to promote softball to any great degree with a four-team league in 1928. In six years it had grown into a well-knit organization of sixty-eight men's and sixteen women's teams.

In 1934 the Amateur Athletic Federation conducted a Texas state tournament for girls at Beaumont and for men at Austin. At the same time

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. N. J. Simmons, State Commissioner for Tennessee, 1954.

a league was being formed deep in the heart of Texas with the towns of Palestine, Fairfield, Mexia, and Teague.

In 1936 the Junior Chamber of Commerce sponsored, promoted, and built four lighted softball fields in Houston and the city's softball teams jumped from forty to over two hundred, and have been increasing ever since that time. By 1938 the game had spread all over Texas and the total number of teams now registered with the Amateur Softball Association is over five thousand.<sup>1</sup>

Utah. Utah softball had its beginning in 1930 as a diversionary game. It remained in this category until 1936 when the first lighted park was built in Salt Lake City. At the same time women's softball was being developed in the state, and games played in both divisions on the same night proved popular with sports fans. This served to popularize the game throughout the state as town after town built night softball parks, expanding the game into a popular pastime.<sup>2</sup>

Vermont. Mr. H. A. Mayforth of Barre was Vermont's first softball Commissioner in 1936. However, the Vermont Amateur Softball Association did not affiliate with the Amateur Softball Association until 1951. At the present time the Green Mountain State has approximately one hundred softball teams with fifteen hundred or more players.

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<sup>1</sup>Spalding's Official Softball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1938), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Dennis Murphy, State Commissioner for Utah, 1954.

Burlington was the focal point for the development of the sport in the earlier years. In recent years Springfield has been fostering the sport and these two cities have been the dominating factor in the development of softball in Vermont.<sup>1</sup>

Virginia. Virginia is known as the "Mother of Tournaments," that is, softball tournaments. The majority of states have two Amateur Softball Association state or metropolitan area tournaments, but Virginia has seven of these events each summer. It also has college varsity softball teams competing against each other for a state Collegiate Championship.

Amateur Softball Association softball started in Virginia in 1935 but it was not until 1936 that it was organized extensively enough to send a candidate for national honors to the World Series in Chicago. Mr. A. B. Chapman of Norfolk was the first Commissioner in the state.

In 1953 Virginia had one hundred twelve affiliated teams in thirty-six communities, and approximately twice that number unaffiliated. Most Virginia cities have lighted softball fields with Richmond having twenty-one.<sup>2</sup>

Washington. Softball is known to have been played in the state of Washington under various names since 1912. It was played chiefly on the city playgrounds with the fourteen-inch and sixteen-inch ball.

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Bruce Campbell, State Commissioner for Vermont, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. B. A. Wolf, State Commissioner for Virginia, 1954.

However, in 1922 most of the playgrounds changed to the twelve-inch sphere.

The first state tournament was held in 1923 with over six hundred teams competing. It was not until 1938 that the game was put on a permanent organized basis and was affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association. Mr. Royal Brougham of Seattle was the state's first Commissioner.<sup>1</sup>

West Virginia. For several years the sport of softball was operated in West Virginia without much planning or organizing. The state championship was determined by an open tournament for men only. The women's championships are still determined in this manner but the increase in the number of men's teams made it expedient to play the state title between the winners of ten district tournaments. The first Commissioner of softball in West Virginia was Mr. G. Allison of the Huntington Young Men's Christian Association.<sup>2</sup>

Wisconsin. The actual start of softball in Wisconsin is not officially recorded, but it is known that the Badger State did not let its sister commonwealth, Minnesota, stay long ahead of it. The first Wisconsin state champions to take part in a multi-state tournament did so in 1929. Old newspaper clippings indicate that the game was well

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<sup>1</sup>"Andy Pendergast Big Cog in Washington State," Balls and Strikes (January, 1953), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Material received from Mr. Bill Bess, State Commissioner for West Virginia, 1954.

thought of and extensively played in Kenosha as far back as 1931 with a team from that city competing for state honors in the twelve-inch "Kitten Ball" tournament.

In 1932 Wisconsin played host to the Diamond Ball national tourney in which forty teams from every part of the United States east of the Rockies participated. However, twenty-four of these teams were from Wisconsin and they placed the first four winners. Hence, it was to be expected that in 1933 when the Amateur Softball Association was formed and held its first tournament at the Chicago World's Fair the state of Wisconsin was well represented in both the men's and women's divisions.

By 1934 softball was a big sport in Wisconsin with many communities installing lighted parks. In 1940 Wauwatosa, with a population of twenty-five thousand, had four thousand twenty-five of these inhabitants registered with the recreation department as softball players. In the same year the Milwaukee Softball Association reported five leagues, ninety-seven teams, and 1,455 players. At tournament time these teams were augmented by 1,722 of Milwaukee's playground teams totaling over twenty-five thousand players. In 1933 a women's league was also formed in Milwaukee.

Sheboygan, which held the annual state tournament in 1934, reported fifty thousand paid admissions at softball games during the summer.

In 1937 the first lighted softball diamond was installed in Milwaukee. The resultant increase in softball enthusiasm and spectator interest resulted in the Burbank Playground being lighted in 1940.

Since that time many softball diamonds have been built by the Municipal Athletic Division, ten of them being lighted. Throughout the past thirty years city authorities reported that there has been an average of twenty leagues with one hundred sixty-three teams playing each year.

West Allis has always been very prominent in girls' softball since the recreation department promoted softball among the city's girls as early as 1934.<sup>1</sup>

Wyoming. Softball in Wyoming started as an experiment in 1932. Mr. J. M. Fleming of Casper organized two teams of hardball players to try out the game known as "Playground Ball" which was becoming popular "back East" in Minnesota and other states. The new game was so well received that they continued playing the remainder of the summer and in the winter moved the game indoors into the Casper National Guard Armory. The game spread during the next few years as more and more groups took it up and liked it. Each team had its own rules, however, and inter-community competition was marred by the differences which caused confusion and misunderstanding. The definition of a legal pitch was the biggest point of contention as each team wanted to play under a rule best suited to the particular style of its own pitcher.

Consequently, softball went downhill in Wyoming until 1947 when Mr. Joe Peberdy was appointed the first Commissioner by the Amateur Softball Association. Mr. Peberdy passed away just as his work had barely

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Guy C. Wertz, State Commissioner for Wisconsin, and Mr. Frederick H. Seeger, Metropolitan Commissioner, 1954.



started and he was succeeded in 1948 by Mr. Fleming. Mr. Fleming traveled extensively throughout Wyoming securing sponsors and groups who wanted to play the game, and convincing city administrations of the necessity for providing lighted softball parks. In 1948 there were five fields provided with lights and at the present time every Wyoming city of three thousand or more population has its lighted softball field. As a result there are now twenty-six men's leagues in the state, seven women's leagues, eighty youth leagues, and forty church leagues.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. John M. Fleming, State Commissioner for Wyoming, 1954.

## CHAPTER V

### SOFTBALL IN IOWA

The game of softball had its beginning in Iowa about the year 1926. At its inception it was called "Indoor Ball," as it was first played indoors at the Des Moines Young Men's Christian Association with a sixteen-inch ball. As the game grew and people became more interested, it was moved outdoors where it is still played at the present time.

The first organized league was organized by Mr. Henry Hasbrouck, the Young Men's Christian Association physical director at that time. As the game continued to grow by leaps and bounds, the city playground and recreation commission in Des Moines took charge of the leagues. Mr. Joe M. Campbell became the first Director of Municipal Athletics in 1928, a position which he still holds at the present time. Under his auspices, the Constitution and By-Laws in conjunction with the American Baseball Congress were published along with the Supplemental Scorebook. He assisted in the organization of the first night softball leagues in Des Moines in 1933 and the first city recreational softball tourney in 1936. This latter tournament is still played annually.

Softball games have always been well attended in Des Moines, mostly because the city officials had the foresight to install lights on the recreation fields as recommended by Director Campbell.

Two other people who have contributed greatly to the advancement of softball in Iowa are Mr. Don Kruse of Boone and Mr. Clarence Hohl of Des Moines. Mr. Kruse is probably the greatest softball enthusiast in

the state of Iowa and his ceaseless efforts to further the interests of the game are immeasurable. For example, the majority of Iowa districts have only eight teams, whereas Mr. Kruse's districts have thirty-five teams.

Mr. Hohl launched girls' softball in the Hawkeye State in 1931 and has undoubtedly contributed more time and effort to the sport in the women's division than any other individual. His untiring interest has kept the game alive down through the years since he introduced it into the state.

The Old Pals' Club of Des Moines has been acknowledged as one of the best softball clubs that has ever played in the state of Iowa. This club was active from 1932 through 1937. Its members were all-around athletes and it has been the consensus of opinion that any of the modern ball clubs would still have a rough time beating it. This team won the first Iowa State Tournament held in 1932.

Several other well-known teams in Des Moines when the game was first introduced were the Riverview Park Girls, Hammer Drug, Cooperative Club, and the Keeling Colts men's teams.

The first lighted field in Iowa was at Newton, with the first night game being played at West High School in Des Moines. Pleasantville had the distinction of having the first lighted "home plate" area, and Prairie City had the first electric scoreboard.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Material obtained from Mr. Joe M. Campbell, Municipal Director of Des Moines softball in an interview with the writer November 27, 1953.

According to Mr. Jack North, the present State Commissioner, there are approximately five hundred lighted softball fields in the state at the present time. In addition there are approximately three hundred fifty high school football fields which are converted for summertime softball. There were also two hundred teams registered in the Iowa Amateur Softball Association for 1955. There were approximately sixty leagues in the state, with Des Moines having twelve leagues during the summer.<sup>1</sup>

The first state Commissioner of Iowa was Mr. C. T. Primm of Sioux City. Since the founding of the Amateur Softball Association, men's and women's teams representing the state have given a good account of themselves in national and regional tournaments after qualifying for these tourneys by winning the state championships.

In 1934 the Patty Anne team of Boone took fourth place in the softball World Series at Lincoln Park in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> In 1938 the Iowa Packers of Des Moines reached the semi-finals of the world tournament at Chicago.<sup>3</sup> Blue Bunny Ice Cream team of Sioux City won the state men's title at Boone in 1952 and then won the Western Regional tourney held at St. Joseph, Missouri, thus becoming the first Iowa team to win a Regional crown since the tournament began in 1942.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Mr. Jack North, State Commissioner for Iowa, 1955.

<sup>2</sup>Official Guide and Handbook (Des Moines: Iowa Amateur Athletic Association, 1940), p. 46.

<sup>3</sup>Des Moines Register, August 29, 1938, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Des Moines Register, September 8, 1952, p. 15.

In 1947 the Walker-Shay Realty team of Des Moines became the first women's team from Iowa to win the Western Regional held at Des Moines.<sup>1</sup> The women's teams made their best showing in 1948 when the same team won the Western Regional crown at Des Moines, then tied for third place in the world's tourney held at Portland, Oregon by winning three and losing two.<sup>2</sup> The Iowa women won the Regional title for the third time in 1953 when Greenwood Electric of Des Moines won it at St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>3</sup>

Following is a list of the men's champions of Iowa softball since the first recorded tournaments in 1930:

1930 - Dodgers, Fort Dodge  
 1931 - Old Pals, Des Moines  
 1932 - Old Pals, Des Moines  
 1933 - Old Pals, Des Moines  
 1934 - Patty Annes, Boone  
 1935 - Boone Dairy, Boone  
 1936 - Schukei Motors, Waterloo  
 1937 - Nite Hawks, Boone  
 1938 - Iowa Packers, Des Moines  
 1939 - Schukei Motors, Waterloo  
 1940 - Sioux Toolers, Sioux City  
 1941 - Iowa Packers, Des Moines  
 1942 - Boyt Harness, Des Moines  
 1943 - Tobin Packers, Fort Dodge  
 1944 - Prisoners of War, Clarinda  
 1945 - Prisoners of War, Clarinda  
 1946 - John Deere Plows, Waterloo  
 1947 - Willkie Vets, Des Moines  
 1948 - John Deere Plows, Waterloo

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<sup>1</sup> Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Leonia, New Jersey: Wells Publishing Company, 1948), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Amateur Softball Association, Official Softball Guide (Leonia, New Jersey: Wells Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 107-109.

<sup>3</sup> Des Moines Register, August 30, 1953, p. 6.

- 1949 - Burnette Motors, Sioux City
- 1950 - Danceland, Cedar Rapids
- 1951 - Hot-N-Tots, Des Moines
- 1952 - Blue Bunnies, Sioux City
- 1953 - Whitey's Autos, Cedar Rapids
- 1954 - Glenn Towers Truckers, Des Moines
- 1955 - Glenn Towers Truckers, Des Moines<sup>1</sup>

The champions of women's softball in Iowa since their first recorded statewide competition are:

- 1934 - Denison Club, Mason City
- 1935 - Georgia Porgia Girls, Council Bluffs
- 1936 - Georgia Porgia Girls, Council Bluffs
- 1937 - Raben Auto Parts, Council Bluffs
- 1938 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1939 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1940 - Hamilton Funeral, Des Moines
- 1941 - Hamilton Funeral, Des Moines
- 1942 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1943 - Holy Trinity, Des Moines
- 1944 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1945 - Walker Realty, Des Moines
- 1946 - Walker-Shay Realty, Des Moines
- 1947 - Walker-Shay Realty, Des Moines
- 1948 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1949 - Kessell Transfer, Des Moines
- 1950 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1951 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1952 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1953 - Greenwood Electric, Des Moines
- 1954 - Central Loan, Des Moines
- 1955 - Glicks Chicks, Davenport<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Compiled from information gathered in research by writer.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### MISCELLANEOUS SOFTBALL DATA

Softball in schools and colleges. Softball is one of the important activities of the physical education program in from 90 to 100 per cent of the senior and junior high schools of the United States. This mass participation in America's national game is fitting, and there are practically no dissenters even among those whose skill is at a very low level.

The largest number of varsity softball teams in 1953 was in New York State, where four hundred thirteen of the seven hundred schools reporting supported varsity squads. The other fourteen states reported varsity teams as follows:

1. Indiana - 159 varsity softball teams in the state's 770 high schools.
2. Maryland - 50 of the state's 137 senior high schools have girls' varsity softball only.
3. Michigan - between 75 and 100 varsity teams.
4. Virginia - 43 boys' and 153 girls' varsity teams.
5. Idaho - 9 high schools with varsity teams play interscholastic softball; 14 others have intramural softball leagues but no intramural activity.
6. New Mexico - 10 of 129 high schools have varsity softball.
7. Illinois - 94 out of 600 schools have varsity softball.
8. Delaware - 19 high schools have girls' varsity softball teams.
9. Nebraska - 25 or 30 have varsity teams.
10. Ohio - 6 of 993 high schools with boys' varsity teams; 99 have girls' varsity.
11. California - 8 varsity softball teams.
12. Wyoming - 2 schools have varsity teams.
13. Oklahoma - 17 schools have boys' varsity softball out of 531 high schools. Have girls' state softball championship tournament but no boys'.
14. North Dakota - intramural champions of some schools play the intramural winners of nearby communities.

15. Texas - for 1954 the Houston junior high schools (16 teams) have dropped hardball for softball. One factor in the changeover was the lower costs of softball over the orthodox brand.<sup>1</sup>

All states reported heavy intramural programs as integral parts of the physical education activities. The Texas Board of Education, in an instruction manual for the health and physical education course in senior and junior high schools, stated:

Softball is doubtlessly the most widely played game in the country. It is engaged in by youths and adults, and is a suitable recreation activity for use outside of the schools. For these reasons, schools should do a better job of teaching the skills involved.<sup>2</sup>

In this connection the University of Maryland, whose football teams have been outstanding in the nation in recent years, is inaugurating a course in softball coaching for the co-ed students of its physical education department.<sup>3</sup>

The state of Maine's Physical Education Handbook stated:

Softball has a distinct place, both required and voluntary, in the school physical education program. It is a healthful, large-muscle activity, enjoyed by both sexes. Softball has the advantage of being easily adaptable to all ages. The carry-over

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<sup>1</sup>Material received from Mr. Morris A. Bealle, former Commissioner for the District of Columbia, 1954.

<sup>2</sup>L. A. Woods, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Health and Physical Education for Junior and Senior High Schools, Bulletin No. 444 (Houston, Texas: State Board of Education, 1953), p. 230.

<sup>3</sup>Material received from Mr. Morris A. Bealle, former State Commissioner for District of Columbia, 1954.



value of the sport is high, particularly because of the permanence of the game in many recreation programs.<sup>1</sup>

Missouri has a physical education program for secondary schools, a brochure for which stated:

The ancient game of ball and bat, as applied by the English, had a distinct resemblance to our softball of today. In the ancient game the English used a softball, small bats, and lots of players. All of these features are included in our softball game of today.<sup>2</sup>

Virginia colleges have taken the lead in softball varsity competition, chiefly because of the enterprise and activities of Mr. Henry Wolfe, Amateur Softball Commissioner for the state. A tournament is conducted annually in the varsity division and each college is permitted to certify its representative on any basis it desires. Some have varsity teams, others intramural winners and fraternity champions, and the Virginia Military Institute and Virginia Polytechnic Institute send the winners of their inter-company softball competition. The tournament must end before May 15th, at which time the examination periods at all colleges begin. This pattern is a good one and undoubtedly many state college groups will follow it in the future.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Physical Education Handbook, Bulletin No. 11 (Augusta, Maine: State Department of Education, 1949), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Health, Physical Education and Recreation, "Missouri at Work on the Public School Curriculum, Secondary School Series," Bulletin No. 9 (Jefferson City, Missouri: State Department of Education, 1941), p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>Material received from Mr. Henry Wolfe, State Commissioner for Virginia, 1954.

Slow-pitch softball. Softball originally, in each phase of its development, was of the slow-pitch variety. When George Hancock made the rules for indoor baseball in 1887, no attempt was made to put any speed into the pitching. The Minneapolis version also made no attempt at speed, the object of the game being to hit the ball as far as possible and then run as far as possible without being put out. In this game the pitcher relied entirely on his fielders.

In the early 1900's in Chicago, pitchers found that they could put a tremendous spin on the big seventeen-inch ball which was used in the high school gymnasiums and park fieldhouses. In the 1920's, with the organization of the National Playground Ball Association and the National Diamond Ball Association and their various state and sectional tournaments, the competitive spirit began to develop to a greater extent. Pitchers found that they could generate great speed on the ball by swinging their pitching arms around in a complete vertical arc or circle before letting the ball go. This maneuver was called the "Windmill Pitch."

Others found they could greatly accelerate the speed of their pitch by swinging their pitching arms around in a horizontal figure eight. The latest addition to the batters' woes has been the "Sling-shot Pitch" which is becoming popular mostly because it is less wearing on the arm than the other two types of pitching.

To prevent continuous strikeouts from making the game monotonous, some leagues and associations made rules that the ball must be pitched slowly enough to describe a visible vertical arc on the way to the plate.

This changed the game from a pitcher's to a batter's paradise.

When the National Diamond Ball Association assembled forty teams for a national tournament in Milwaukee in 1932, it found all types of rules, distances, size of balls, and pitching. For the purposes of the tournament, fast pitching was allowed but the fourteen-inch ball was used. When the Amateur Softball Association launched its great stabilizing and permanentizing movement in 1933, it encountered the same difficulty. It solved that problem by dividing the men's teams into two classes. Thirty of the forty men's teams preferred fastball pitching. They were accommodated, while the ten who were accustomed to the slow pitch game played a tournament of their own. The fifteen girls' teams lacked a windmill pitcher so there was no problem in their division.

However, after 1933 the Amateur Softball Association dropped the slow-pitch version, and it was not until 1953 that this governmental body again took up the slow-ball variety officially. In the meantime, most players in the city of Chicago had refused to substitute fast pitching for the slow variety.

In the 1931 tournament in Chicago under the sponsorship of the Amateur Softball Association, six hundred teams participated. Rules were drawn up for slow pitch softball which have been in use ever since that time with but slight changes. The six hundred teams entered caused the tournament to run so long they were forced to play the later games in the Fifty-fifth Street Armory where six thousand howling spectators saw the championship finally decided.

Since that time, Chicago slow-pitch exponents have refused to be side-tracked by the more spectacular fastball type. While fastball has since all but faded out of the picture, the slow-pitch brand has increased. Fostered, supervised, and managed by the Chicago Umpires Protective League, Chicago last year had one hundred twenty-eight slow-pitch softball leagues. These circuits carried from eight to forty teams each, but the average has been estimated at sixteen teams to the league. This would make the huge total of over two thousand teams playing slow-pitch softball in the city of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the city did not enter the Amateur Softball Association's slow-pitch national tournament in Cincinnati in 1953 for some unexplained reason.

The major differences between slow-pitch and fast-pitch softball are as follows. The slow-pitch game has:

1. Fifty-foot bases.
2. Thirty-five foot pitching distance.
3. Sixteen-inch ball.
4. No gloves used.
5. Ten players to a team.
6. In pitching the ball must describe a visible arc on the way to the plate.
7. Two, and only two, windmill revolutions allowed in pitching.
8. A fairly bunted ball, or a chop hit, is out.
9. Baserunners may lead off base, but no stealing allowed.<sup>2</sup>

Ohio started a slow-pitch movement in 1935 in Lakewood, a suburb of Cleveland, where the Amateur Softball Association championships were

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<sup>1</sup>Guide and Rules for Slow Pitching (Chicago: The Umpires Protective Association of Chicago, 1954-1955), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

held from 1945 to 1948. The circuits formed were called the "Not-So-Good Leagues" but the participants enjoyed the sport.<sup>1</sup>

The first such league was one composed of four teams of city employees operated by the Cleveland Recreation Department. At the end of the league's first season a Lakewood tinsmith constructed a large tin cup which was presented to the winners as a trophy. The cup was larger than any man on the team and had plenty of surface for suitable engraving. It was presented to the bewildered manager at an annual Trophy Night Banquet in Cleveland for all sports. The publicity this gag brought gave great impetus to the slow-pitch game in the Cleveland area.<sup>2</sup>

Softball for girls. Women's softball got its start in 1895. Spalding's Official Indoor Baseball Guide for 1904 stated that the first such team was organized in Chicago's West Division High School in 1895. There was no attempt made to coach the team for competitive playing until the winter of 1899. Since that time, the game has gained steadily in favor among the girls of Chicago's high schools. The Guide also stated that interest in girls' indoor baseball was hard to create. It attributed this to the fact that coaches and teams became discouraged because the average girl was not a "natural ball player" and therefore required a lot of time and patience to develop baseball proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert McKnight, "Slow Pitching Softball Keeping Many from Looking Fat and Forty," Balls and Strikes (May, 1950), 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Spalding's Official Indoor Baseball Guide (New York: American Sports Publishing Company, 1904), pp. 115-117.

Girls do not naturally run, throw, or hit like boys but, at the present time, the playgrounds and Catholic Youth Organizations are starting girls at twelve years of age and developing wonderful coordination of this sort. All major girls' teams of today include only those players who can throw, hit, and run with the same coordination as their brothers and boy friends.

Prior to the development program of the Amateur Softball Association there was no such thing as women's softball, as such. There was haphazard playing on the playgrounds and some of the girls tried to emulate their brothers by playing regulation baseball, but this did not prove to be very successful. There were a few exceptional girl players such as Babe Didrickson but, on the whole, baseball was too much for girls and recreation experts thought something should be done about this situation.

In April, 1923, the aid of Mrs. Herbert Hoover was sought and obtained. She called a conference in Washington of recreation leaders, and it was here that the Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation was created.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, under the auspices of this organization, Mrs. Gladys Palmer of Ohio State University compiled a set of baseball rules for women, recognizing the fact that standard baseball was too strenuous and dangerous for the weaker sex.

The American Physical Education Association, through its National Committee on Women's Athletics, recommended that Mrs. Palmer's rules be

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<sup>1</sup>Eline Von Borries, The National Section on Women's Athletics (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, February, 1941), p. 10.

adopted for and used generally by women. The principal items in the Palmer Code were smaller bats, shorter bases and pitching distances, and a larger and not quite-so-hard ball. This is practically the softball structure of today.

After seeing her principles in practical application for six years, Mrs. Palmer wrote in 1929:

From the educational standpoint baseball, because of its highly organized nature, has a great deal in its favor as a game for girls and women. It teaches them what the boys have learned from time immemorial in their sandlot games—the ability to think quickly, to coordinate thought and action, to exercise good judgment, and a certain faculty in divining in advance the thoughts of others. The development in girls and women of loyalty and self-confidence, as well as a sense of responsibility and good sportsmanship, are not the least of the advantages of the game.<sup>1</sup>

The girls who have played on the teams which went to the various state and regional tournaments year after year have found softball the vehicle to make new friends and to renew pleasant acquaintances year after year. They have also found this travel to be beneficial and exhilarating.

In 1952, by actual count, over fifteen hundred women's teams took part in city, district, state, and regional championship games. To show the carry-over value of softball, the average age of these fifteen hundred teams which took part in the 1952 tournaments was 26.9 years. Softball is now an integral part of the physical education program in practically every high school in the country. To some extent the

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<sup>1</sup>Lee H. Fischer, How to Play Winning Softball (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 106.

colleges include this great American game in their physical education curricula.

The winners and contenders in all of the tournaments were there because they loved softball and because they were diligent in play and practice, but most important because from early adolescence they were trained to throw, run, and hit like boys. Contrary to widespread belief, the great athletic proficiency attained by these top flight girl softball players has detracted in no way from their feminine charm. Many of them could enter any beauty contest and finish in the upper or top brackets. The outdoor life and athletic training, when properly pursued, tends to increase the beauty of a girl, and these world softball tournaments display many of America's most attractive daughters.

The Athletic Institute of Chicago, a trade organization composed of leading manufacturers of athletic supplies and equipment, has recently published a small volume entitled Improve Your Softball. It is fully illustrated, gives as much consideration to girls' softball as to the masculine type, and is valuable to all who would like to be proficient in this game of softball.

Mrs. Betty Dillahunt, a physical education teacher at Wittenburg College, herself a top flight Ohio softball player for twenty years, summed up her impressions of women's softball from her vast experience thus:

Softball, one of our truly American games, has taken its place in the American scene as a potentially fine force in the lives of the many people who play the game. As the leadership in softball continues to improve, so then will this game contribute even more



to the lives of those hundreds of thousands of women who participate in softball each year.<sup>1</sup>

International Softball League. In 1948 Mr. Carroll Forbes of Greeley, Colorado, a tire distributor and softball enthusiast for many years, built a \$100,000 softball stadium in his home town. He had been a member of the Amateur Softball Association from its inception until 1947.

At that time he believed another national organization was desirable for "teams other than industrial ones that dominate Amateur Softball Association play." He held tournaments in his park in 1949 and 1950 but made no attempt to have them national in scope. By late 1950 he felt that his idea was ready to be put into action and on December 4 he called a meeting in Chicago attended by representatives of twenty states. The International Softball League was formed and soon incorporated.

Mr. Rex Wilson of El Paso, Texas, was elected President and Mr. Forbes, Executive Secretary. The League's first nationwide tournament was held in 1951 at Forbes Field in Greeley and was for men only, a practice which has been continued up to the present time.

Mr. Forbes had originally felt that all tournaments would be held in his own park but the one in 1952 was moved to Plainview, Texas. The 1953 tournament was held at Selma, California, with the net receipts

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<sup>1</sup>Letter from Mrs. Betty Dillahunt, September 27, 1954.

being donated to the Shrine Fund for Crippled Children. The 1954 tournament was again held in Selma, California, but the 1955 event was moved to New Bedford, Illinois.<sup>1</sup>

The National Softball Congress. In 1945 the American Softball Association, better known as the George Sisler Softball Congress, disbanded. This left no place for those teams, leagues, and associations who desired to play independently of the so-called "softball trust." The following year Mr. Larry Walker and "Two Gun" Hunt, former star players in Arizona, decided to provide this independent outlet. They formed the National Softball Congress with headquarters at the Walker residence, 1735 West Roosevelt Street, Phoenix, where it still is today.

The Congress wisely selected Judge Arthur T. LaPrade of the Arizona Supreme Court as High Commissioner. Judge LaPrade was given the equivalent powers enjoyed by Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis when he was High Commissioner of Organized Baseball. That he has used these powers wisely and well is attested to by the fact that he has retained this post, throughout the eight years of the National Softball Congress' existence, satisfactorily to everyone concerned.

The tournaments of this Congress for both men and women have been centered in the Southwestern part of the country and the Pacific Coast. Twenty-seven states, Canada, and Mexico have sent participating teams to

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<sup>1</sup>International Softball League Bulletin (Greeley, Colorado: League Publishing Company, 1955), pp. 1-35.

these national tournaments.

Each year of its existence the National Softball Congress has conducted a "Miss Softball" contest at its national tournaments, but there is no record of any "Mr. Softball" winners. The Congress issues annually a well-written Guide giving the results of all national tournaments during its existence, its organizational setup, its officers, and the rules and regulations of the organization. No playing rules are included, since the Congress plays under the code formulated by the Joint Committee on Softball Rules.

The National Softball Congress' stated eligibility rules for players include the barring of players who have participated in professional athletics after June 1st of the current year, limit expenses to \$10 per day and travel money, prohibit college and high school players from participating while a member of their school team, and set July 1 as the state residence deadline for tournament players.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Softball Congress, General Rules (Phoenix, Arizona: The National Softball Congress, 1955), pp. 1-81.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

If one intends to teach physical education or to coach, one should not only have a sound background of the sport but should also have a thorough knowledge of the history and development of the particular sport he intends to teach or coach.

With this purpose in mind, the writer of this research made an extensive study of available records and materials on the American game of Softball. By tracing the history of the game's rise and development through its evolutionary stages of various names such as "Diamond Ball," "Kitten Ball," and "Playground Ball," the writer learned that Chicago and Minneapolis are both given credit for the growth of the sport which is a traditional American game.

The story of the old boxing glove at the Farragut Boat Club in Chicago was generally accepted as the softball genesis, but the writer found that the Minneapolis Fire Department had a vigorous kitten ball program in the early 1900's.

Although the game of softball dates back to a period long before the depression era, the game really came into its own around 1933 when the Amateur Softball Association was founded and played its first World Tournament in Chicago during the World's Fair. During that trying economic period, the low cost of equipping a team, plus the fact that an impromptu game of softball could be played in an area much smaller than

that required for most other outdoor games, caused it to take hold like wildfire.

According to the Amateur Softball Association, the governing body of softball play in the world, the game has gained standing as the number one sport in the world from a participator and spectator viewpoint. To-day there are more softball players in the United States than there are participants in any other team game. Every corner lot has its team and most towns and cities have more softball leagues than they have facilities to accommodate them. The game has many benefits because it can be played by all walks of life. It is taught and played in physical education classes throughout the world.

This study tells why, how, and in what manner and by whose aegis, softball has become the world's foremost participant sport. It gives a brief recorded history of softball in each of the forty-eight states, together with its personalities and promoters through the years.

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Connecticut	John Lindquist, Commissioner
District of Columbia	Morris A. Bealle, Former Commissioner
Georgia	A. H. Bishop, Commissioner
Illinois	Charles McCord, Commissioner
Iowa	Joe M. Campbell, Municipal Director, Des Moines
Iowa	Jack North, Commissioner
Kansas	E. B. McGrew, Commissioner
Louisiana	Herbert Paillet, Commissioner
Louisiana	Ben Turcan, Metropolitan Commissioner, New Orleans
Massachusetts	Albert Rheault, Commissioner
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Minneapolis	Harold A. Johnson, Former Director of Recreation
Minnesota	Einar W. Nelson, Commissioner
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